

ABSTRACT

AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES/CONCENTRATION IN HISTORY

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Pike County Blacks: The Spirit of Populist Revolt and White Tolerance (1891-1896) as Depicted in the Pike County Journal and Other Related Sources

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The "revolutionary" racial moderation of the 1890's Populist movement in Georgia has especially been a subject of fascination for historians since C. Vann Woodward, in Tom Watson , Agrarian Rebel (1938), sent out this message in portraying Populism's successes in implementing an unprecedented degree of political harmony between Black and white rural masses in Georgia.

But except for explaining Georgia Populism's racial rapprochement in terms of its expediency, historians have not expounded at length on the reasons for Populism's apparent deviation from the pattern of racial hostility which characterized post-Reconstruction Democratic ("solid South") politics.

Using one case example, Pike county, this thesis, however, attempts to explain the racial tolerance of Populism in Pike county in an economic as well as a political context, emphasizing also the peculiar social milieu in which the Populist movement occurred in this Georgia county. Through the historic perspective it will be seen that Populism's racial tolerance in Pike had a dramatic precedent in an even more racially

tolerant revolt against the county Democratic party in the earlier 1880's period--namely, the Pike area's focal prohibition independent party movement.

But in addition to identifying specific precedents of racial tolerance such as the Pike area 1880's prohibition movement, this thesis attempts to explain Populism's racial mores in Pike county, Georgia as one aspect of the climactic era which closed a tumultuous post-slave post-war era. And in this respect, the thesis attempts to briefly chronicle the story of a generation--Georgia's war-devastated generation. It is the theory of this essay that this generation was like none other in the history of the South; it was accustomed to killing and brutality, fear and hunger. It was a generation transformed by suffering and violence and crime. And in Pike, and probably much of Georgia, this generation was transformed to some degree by the dark force of addictive hard drugs.

And having this "off-balance" personality, this post-war generation in Pike county and Georgia was faced with the pressure of living especially in the 1890's continuously on the edge of economic collapse. And in Pike another mind-shattering pressure faced the people in the heart-breaking Nineties period--namely, natural disasters in the form of devastating cyclones, blizzards, crop failures, and an earthquake. In the face of impossible economic conditions, it will be seen that this people looked for survival especially to religion and radical, violent, Populist-centered politics.

In addition this thesis is a study of a newspaper's view of race and of an era. For it is through the Pike County Journal, the official county newspaper that the racial tolerance in Pike Populism is seen to

be part of a current flowing in this post-Reconstruction rural society. And it is through the Pike County Journal, and to a lesser degree through the official newspaper of adjoining Spalding county, the Griffin Daily News, that the reader is alerted to the fact that the racial barrier in Pike county during the 1890's was less destructive to the quality of life in this Southern society than city-bred and Northern historians might have realized. Also the Griffin News, which started in the Nineties to reflect profound racial hostility and other nascent twentieth century trends, is used as a foil to highlight the racial tolerance of the newspaper printed at Zebulon some ten miles up the road from Griffin, the Pike County Journal.

And finally this thesis is the story of a generation of Pike county Blacks, which like Blacks throughout the South, was facing the supreme test of their freedom by the last decade of the nineteenth century. And although the Pike Blacks were nevertheless active in the county Populist movement, it will be seen that unlike the liberal precursor prohibition party movement, the Pike Populist movement restricted Blacks' participation and segregated them. But during this era of more restricted Black involvement in political revolt, it will be seen that Black dissent--or the "spirit of Populist revolt"--spilled over into a sphere to which Blacks' efforts to secure their freedom would be largely relegated in the dawning 'jim crow' twentieth century--namely, public education.

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INTRODUCTION

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¹
C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel (New York: Macmillan Co., 1938).

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Overview of the Pike County Journal and the Griffin Daily News in the 1890's.-- In the cataclysmic 1890's period, before the implementation of Rural Free Delivery passed through the efforts in Congress of Populist apostle Tom Watson, not one farmer in three hundred got a daily newspaper. And those farmers who lived five or more miles from a post office "were fortunate to get their mail once a week."¹

¹ Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 244.

During the Nineties the Pike County Journal was published at the Pike county seat, the tiny railroad burg and rural center, Zebulon. The Journal had been established as a weekly in 1888. The sole editor, apparently, of the newspaper until 1896 was a preacher, the Reverend Parry Lee.

During the 1890's, as will be seen, Lee was a rock upon which an amazing vein of liberal Journal thought was founded. Also whereas the Pike Journal called itself the official newspaper of the county and it reported at length on county legal business and detailed county court proceedings, it apparently was a privately held operation. During the 1890's the newspaper was also in considerable debt. In 1892, for example, almost one thousand dollars was owed the Journal in unpaid subscriptions. Lee asked the hard-pressed Pike depression generation to "settle up, don't get mad."¹

In addition to Rev. Lee's role as steward of an excited flow of opinion in Pike in the Nineties, he was actively involved in politics, and was, for example, elected secretary to a silver coinage or free silver convention in Griffin in 1895.²

Douglass Glessner, the editor of the prolific, remarkable Griffin Daily News during the widely divergent 1890's and precursor 1880's periods of that newspaper's publication, was also directly involved in Democratic politics in the Nineties. Also Glessner, as will be seen, wielded considerable power in the era as the editor of the influential Democratic

1

Pike County Journal, 2 December 1892. (Hereafter referred to as P. Journal).

2

P. Journal, 5 July 1895.

daily published at Georgia's eleventh largest town, which was also the site of a regional agricultural experiment station and a permanent military encampment, the leading cotton market of middle Georgia-- and a focus of statewide farmer protest.

Overview of the Nineties Generation of Blacks and Whites in Pike County, Georgia.-- The generation which witnessed the great farmer revolt of the 1890's in Pike county contained the all-pervading slave memory-- which was translated as the haunting pathos and violent hatred of the Lost Cause in whites, and was translated in a memory of suffering beyond human understanding in Blacks. This generation had seen the holocaust in its land--it had seen the war-maimed, the scorched earth, the rubble that was made of Atlanta. It had seen the fields of blood. And all of this generation's tomorrows, it would seem, by oral testimony and the other research of this thesis, were overshadowed by these unshakeable burdens.

Lucy Whatley, born in the Pike area in the 1920's remembered that her large, strong-boned paternal grandfather would not talk with his grandchildren about his enslavement, but in hushed tones slowly unveiled his ordeal and the meaning of his wounded back to the generation of his children--who in turn conveyed the message to the man's grandchildren.¹

Mrs. Mattie Settles Whatley, the almost one hundred-year-old daughter of Pike former slaves Warren Settles and Lucy Ward Settles, revealed that her father was the son of his master and a Cherokee Indian bought on the slave block to bear children for the white Settles, as he and his

1

Interview with Lucy Whatley, Atlanta, Georgia, 13 April 1984.

white wife had none of their own. But Settles' mixed-blood children suffered greatly at the hands of his white wife, who made a ritual of jabbing the scissor points into their skulls when she cut their hair.¹

Mrs. Mattie Settles Whatley also remembered her mother Lucy Ward Settles' woeful experience of watching a white slave mistress in the Pike area beat a slave to death. The slave mistress had tied the Black female to a post, put on gloves, and begun beating the Black woman with her gloved hands. This gloved tormentor had her food brought out to her, as she did not want to stop beating the slave. All day she wildly beat her slave--until the poor creature succumbed.²

Mrs. Mary Williams, a former slave of Pike county, was one hundred and fourteen years old at the time of that county's sesquicentennial celebration in 1972. According to the Pike County Historical Committee's proud 1972 report on the county's oldest living soul, Mrs. Williams was manumitted when she was six years old and spent most of her days in hard work with little to eat. She split rails and worked for five dollars a month and remembered good health had characterized her days. With her faculties keen at one hundred and fourteen years of age, this progenitor of one hundred and ninety-eight grand and great-grandchildren had strength still to work her yard. Her message in 1972 was, "With God all things are possible."³

¹ Interview with Mattie Jo Settles Whatley; Atlanta, Georgia, 1 March 1981.

²
Ibid.

³
Pike County Historical Committee, Sesquicentennial 1822-1972, Pike County, Georgia (Zebulon: Pike County Historical Committee, 1972), p. 66.

And during the 1890's when anti-Populist attacks were the trademark of the newspaper of Pike's largest town, the Barnesville Gazette, the heavy press of that newspaper was turned by a blind ex-slave of neighboring Monroe county, "Blind Alfred" Josey. According to a county history report, Josey turned the press 3,000 revolutions for a single edition of each of two newspapers printed at the Gazette office. And on long runs of sometimes 10,000 large circulars in addition to the two periodicals printed weekly at the Gazette office, "the labor was so fatiguing that the pressfeeders had to work in relays," but Josey never missed a single revolution.¹ And when he was ill on one occasion, "his place was taken by three or four men who alternated at the great wheel, each being able to turn it for only a few minutes at a time."² And Josey, who had been blind since the age of three weeks, had made his living cutting wood with an ax--never once cutting himself. But according to his biographer, much of the exslave's life had been "harsh beyond . . . imagination," and intense suffering /was/ delineated on his face."³

"Blind Alfred" remembered the damage which had been wrought by Wheeler's Confederate Cavalry on the Monroe plantation where he grew up. And he remembered the less damaging arrival of Sherman's raiders on the plantation shortly thereafter.⁴ But in the 1890's period of continued

¹ Ben Hardy, Jr., "'Blind Alfred' Josey," in History of Lamar County, ed. by E.A. Fish and Augusta Lambdin (Barnesville: Barnesville News Gazette, 1931), p. 447.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 448.

⁴ Ibid., p. 447.

Southern war hero worship, the ex-Confederate officer and father of two Zebulon, Pike sisters, Misses Ruby and Elizabeth Baker, did not want to pass the horrible war memory on to his children. War had broken all his plans of becoming a doctor, although he continued to pour his heart out to hungry and suffering humanity wandering in the hard times on the railroad tracks by their land. But war was a thing too terrible to talk about.¹

¹

Interview with Elizabeth and Ruby Baker, Zebulon, Georgia,
2 January 1981.

PIKE COUNTY BLACKS: THE SPIRIT OF POPULIST REVOLT AND
WHITE TOLERANCE (1891-1896) AS DEPICTED IN THE
PIKE COUNTY JOURNAL AND OTHER RELATED SOURCES

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CHAPTER I

THE FORMATION OF A GENERATION OF GEORGIANS: FROM RE- CONSTRUCTION UNTIL THE RISE OF THE FARMER'S ALLIANCE

Hard Times and a New Master.-- The generation of Blacks and whites which came to maturity in Georgia during the 1890's had been seasoned by some of the worst conditions which have ever prevailed for any period of time on the north American continent. Georgia was more ravaged by war than any of the Southern states. With more than three fourths of the population engaged in farming, the state's agriculture industry was particularly hard hit. Waves of thousands of people swept down and across the state. The newly freed former slaves especially fled the state in search of the mythological high wages of Mississippi and Louisiana. Capital and credit were all but gone and the crop failures of 1865 and 1866 crashed the planters' hopes of capitalizing on the high price cotton was commanding. In those years thousands of Georgians would have succumbed to starvation and death had it not been for the food distribution program of the federal government. Farm foreclosures were many as farmers had mortgaged their property to obtain stock and other necessities for trying to quickly take advantage of cotton's high price.

The new freedmen's indisposition to work often brought them in droves to the cities--where many lived on the resources of the Freedmen's Bureau. Lawlessness increased to the point of anarchy in the cities. Laws were passed which bound vagrants in other people's service. Burglary, arson, and horsestealing were so rampant that the legislature imposed the death

penalty for these crimes. The prison population overflowed and the objectionable convict lease system was begun.¹

The Civil War and the post bellum period brought about the near demise of the class of Georgia planters which had before the war enjoyed such social, political, and economic pre-eminence through the bloody, chain-wrapped hand of slavery.

Throughout the South labor became a critical post war problem, as the freedmen bucked at the hard discipline of the old cotton plantation. About 1869 it became evident that the plantation system was failing due to a shortage in the labor supply. The ex-slaves disliked working the preferred labor system of post bellum whites, namely that of engaging Blacks as hired hands with food, shelter, garden privileges and so much a month to work in gangs. In these times of irregular cash flow, landlords sometimes did not pay the hands until the end of the season when the crops were sold.² The system smacked of slavery days; Blacks preferred the freedom of tenancy. And, as labor was in great demand--especially since the Black woman was largely withdrawn from the fields--embittered white owners had to acquiesce to Blacks' demands.

The tenancy system in Georgia was complex and circumscribed by complicated laws--which presented grave problems to the illiterate Black masses and gave much room for abuse by the landowners and merchants. The

1

Robert Preston Brooks, The Agrarian Revolution in Georgia, 1965-1912, University of Wisconsin Bulletin, No. 639 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1914), pp. 14-15.

2

Edward Aaron Gaston, "A History of the Negro Wage Earner in Georgia" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1957), p. 70.

basics of the system, evolved largely in the Seventies were that: Cash tenants furnished all their supplies and the landlord furnished only the land and house (for a rent paid by the cash tenant). Under this system the landlord had "nothing to do with the tenant's crop, no right of supervision, as to the sort of crops grown or the amount of labor expended."¹ Tenants' rent was usually stated in cotton, but outside of the black belt considerable cash renting occurred.² Share tenants, on the other hand, furnished nothing but the manual labor. The landlord furnished everything else necessary to make the crop. The owner and tenant were seen as co-partners, but since the landlord undertook all risk, he claimed "the right of complete control over the tenant and the crop, just as in the case of a day laborer."³

Landowners preferred the wage system but were often unable to pay for it or demand it of the scarce labor. Studies have proven that farm yields were higher where labor was more rigidly controlled. But under the precarious conditions of farming in post bellum Georgia, "supervision /of tenants/ was generally relaxed or given up entirely."⁴ A decline in land values and poor crops became the inevitable results as ". . . croppers and renters farmed as they pleased, usually in a slovenly,

¹ Brooks, Agrarian Revolution, p. 52.

² Ibid., p. 53

³ Ibid.

⁴ Willard Range, A Century of Georgia Agriculture, 1850-1950 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954), p. 86.

unscientific manner "1

Only with the superior workers was tenancy a profitable and desirable system for both owner and tenant.²

Deprivation continued on Georgia's farms, partly because so much effort was tied to trying to reinstate King Cotton. But from its pinnacle of a dollar a pound at the end of the war, the selling price of cotton fell drastically until by the beginning of home rule and throughout the Seventies, it averaged 12¢ a pound; and sunk to an average of 9¢ during the Eighties; and to an appalling 7¢ in the era of the Populist revolt.³

Part of the problem was overproduction due to an increase in the number of farmers planting cotton, an increase in the number of acres under cotton cultivation, and to greater use of commercial fertilizers.⁴ The price of cotton was usually lowest at the harvest season, when the most farmers were forced to sell, and had almost always advanced by the following spring. Hence, the middle-man bought when the debt-ridden farmer's cash crop was commanding its lowest price at the exchanges; and he sold it to manufacturing interests at planting time, when the least of the white staple was available and the price was highest. It

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid., p. 87.

3

Alex Arnett, The Populist Movement in Georgia, Studies in History, Economics and Law, Vol. CIV (New York: Columbia University, 1922), p. 65.

4

Ibid.; Range, Georgia Agriculture, pp. 90-95.

was a vicious cycle whereby "If the grower was chagrined at seeing the rise come too late, he was probably inspired with renewed hope as he broke the soil for another crop."¹

The farmer owed staggering interest on loans accorded him in supplies and cash by the local merchant--who could secure bank loans, while farmers' collateral (land) was generally seen as a drug on the market. Hence, the farmer suffered immensely as his cotton dollar depreciated and the dollar of his loan notes stayed constant.

Because the farmers could not borrow from banks at fixed interest rates, merchants stepped in and recorded mortgages or crop liens against yet unproduced crops usually at whatever rate they (the merchants) wanted. Hence, the farmer had to pay his merchant from 20 to 50 percent more than the prevailing cash price for goods that he could have grown himself had he not been obliged to plant so much cotton--preferred by both merchant and farmer for its cash yielding potential. The mortgage (or lien) furthermore brought the farmer into a state of hopeless peonage to the merchant.² Because of the lien the farmer surrendered his freedom and autonomy and became subject to the continuous oversight and direction of the merchant. Every mouthful the farmer purchased; every tool he needed on the farm, his livestock, clothing for his family, the fertilizers--all had to be bought from the merchant who held the crop lien, and in such amounts as the merchant would allow. And no other merchant would sell to

1

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 67.

2

The Cotton Industry: An Essay in American Economic Thought, quoted in Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 55.

the farmer unless the latter paid in cash.¹

Taxes were also proportionally higher for farmers than city dwellers. And railroad rates were higher for the Southern farmer as the shipment of his crops was more likely to involve one-way travel only. Corruption in the financing of the roads contributed to the problem. And until after 1877 the roads paid nothing to state taxes, and even then they still paid nothing to the counties through which they passed (until the Farmer's Alliance legislature of 1890-1891 came into prominence.)

The politics of the post-war South were as turbulent as the economics. Reconstruction, a drastic Republican solution to suppressing the defeated Southern insurgents' efforts to perpetuate slave oppression through Black codes and terrorism, brought the ex-slaves into political office in the South. Protected by federal bayonets, twenty-nine of the one hundred and seventy delegates to Georgia's constitutional convention of 1867 were Black. The convention prohibited slavery, established a general system of public education, and provided for universal malehood suffrage. But through whites' engineering, a constitutional clause stating all voters should be eligible for office was ruled out and, according to W. E. B. DuBois, the way paved for expulsion of Black legislators with the withdrawal of the federal military.²

At the Republican constitutional convention of 1868, fifty-three

1

Ibid.

2

Black Reconstruction, quoted in Jamie Lawson Reddick, "The Negro in the Populist Movement of Georgia" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1933), p. 70.

of the one hundred sixty-six delegates were Blacks. From the district to which Pike county belonged, one of the eight delegates to the convention was Black--namely the illustrious Henry McNeal Turner of Bibb County.¹ And in the election of 1868 Blacks risked their lives to vote for Ulysses Grant, as scores of Georgia Blacks were killed in that year by the Ku Klux Klan.² But in September of 1868 twenty-five Black members of the Georgia House of Representatives were expelled, and shortly thereafter Henry Turner and another Black state senator were removed from the largely Republican Senate.³

These expulsions of Blacks and the refusal of the legislature to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment brought the resumption of military rule upon the "unreconstructed" Georgians and facilitated ratification in the state of the Fifteenth Amendment providing for Negro suffrage.

Always in the background of Blacks' dramatic political gains in the South, were the terroristic secret societies of whites which struck violence against Blacks and sought to drive them out of political office and establish "white supremacy" in the South. White Southerners' vision was clouded about these societies and often portrayed them as secret vigilantes, instead of seeing them in the light of the ruthlessness they perpetrated against Blacks. One 1930's Depression era Pike county

1

Lizzie Mitchell, History of Pike County, Georgia 1822-1932 (Zebulon, Georgia: Published serially in the Pike County Journal, 1933), p. 13.

2

Reconstruction of Georgia, quoted in John Dittmer, Black Georgia in the Progressive Era 1900-1920 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p. 5.

4

Dittmer, Black Georgia, p. 5.

historian, for example, wrote of one of the most lasting of these terror societies:

Several things finally conspired to save the state and the South from the sad, intolerable conditions /created by Reconstruction/. One, the unceasing influence of Northern Democrats in congress /sic/; another, the mysterious Ku Klux Klan:

The Ku Klux Klan was an organization of a few of the best and most law-abiding citizens in almost every community throughout the South, created solely for the purpose of preventing lawlessness, plunder, etc. It usually accomplished its object by appealing to the superstitious fears of the negroes. Pike had her bands of these masked riders and they did great good. Then their work was finished, they quietly disbanded. Do not confuse them with those bearing that name today.¹

The "mysterious" Ku Klux Klan and other white secret terror organizations had as their 'holy' cause the dissolution of Black political equality. And with bloodshed, intimidation, arson, and bribery these bands pushed back the coalition of Republicans, Black freedmen, and federal troops.² In Reconstruction was begun a tradition of corrupt polls in Georgia. And even the "best" class of whites began to take the matter lightly when, according to one Southern apologist, it appeared that corrupt polls were necessary to preserve "the supremacy of the 'respectable' element."³ And according to this same historian, "In regions where the negroes were more numerous the temptation to employ

1

Mitchell, History of Pike County, p. 65.

2

John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, A History of Negro Americans (4th ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), p. 263.

3

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 42.

corrupt practices was naturally stronger."¹ Then as the nation entered in 1873 its first devastating period of depression as a rapidly industrializing economy, federal troop withdrawal was assured in the South and white Southerners fought for a restoration of home rule.

The fight throughout the South to overthrow Radical Republican governments involved riots and otherwise bloody confrontations between whites and Blacks; the use of black lists to obstruct Republicans seeking employment; armed white patrols preventing Blacks' appearance at polling places; and intimidation of all descriptions against Blacks. In 1869 the Ku Klux Klan was officially dissolved; but after 1870 increased violence and klan-like methods--crop burnings, beatings, lynchings--led to the effective demise of Blacks in politics in the South.--The new Democratic "solid South" was on the ascendancy. Under the "solid South" the price for protection was unquestioning allegiance. "Party platforms contained nothing but such platitudes as all white men could agree upon. Incompetency and weakness had to be overlooked for the sake of white solidarity."² The fear of Negro domination was an excuse for leaving unexposed suspected graft by public officials.³

In spite of the terrible pressures of that age, the post-Reconstruction period saw the ex-slaves make painstaking progress. After the loss of federal military protection and help, they pulled together in

1
Ibid.

2
Woodward, Tom Watson, pp. 67-68.

3
Ibid.

unconquerable, church groups.

The Black churches' missionary efforts to relieve the misery of Southern Blacks led to the formation of other groups such as burial societies--rudimentary insurance companies in which Blacks pooled their monies to afford life's unforetold many troubles.

The Black church groups did much to encourage the race to get education. Also, the exigencies and shock of being thrust by Reconstruction into the forefront of politics and government fostered a great desire in Blacks for education. During Reconstruction the federal government and northern missionary societies had started some 2,677 schools for Blacks and whites in the South.¹ Though many were called colleges and universities, they were often elementary and high schools offering a few college courses. By 1877, 48,643 Black children, 28 percent of the school age population in Georgia were enrolled in the state's public schools.²

Hence, Blacks were from the start in on Georgia's first taste of education for the masses. And as the downtrodden ex-slaves especially cherished the chance for an education, numbers of their schools would survive the severe economic pressures and the even more severe racial pressures of the post-Reconstruction period. To the precious thousands of nickles and dimes collected by Black churches for education would be added in the post-Reconstruction period the tens of thousands of dollars

1

Edgar W. Knight, Public Education in the South (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1922), p. 373.

2

Clarence Bacote, "Some Aspects of Negro Life in Georgia, 1880-1908," Journal of Negro History, XLIII (July, 1958), 209.

of northern philanthropists like John Rockefeller. But the great devotion of the Black churches to education was the undeniable rock on which many a Black school was founded in post-Reconstruction Georgia. And so many of the Black schools were maintained, as well as founded, in these mean, desperate times by great churches of the North and their unfaltering, devout missionaries.

These bad times would also witness the rise of the Black landowner. Though free Blacks had owned property before the war, the misfortunes of the white farmer in the post bellum period would provide opportunities for more and more Southern Blacks to own rural property.

In Georgia the labor and financing problems of farmers had caused many whites to move away from their land to towns to seek opportunities in merchandising and other occupations. Some of these whites rented and sold their lands to Black tenants--as well as to whites--and in some cases the land lay idle. Many of the large estates were broken up into smaller plots; but many large estates collected in the merchants' hands. The patterns of tenancy, among other things, affected Blacks' chances for land ownership. As most of the farms Blacks came to own were bought from former landlords or credit merchants, Blacks were most likely to emerge as owners in sections where land was most frequently rented--and least often where land was farmed with wage hands and sharecroppers.¹ Census figures show that by 1880 only 55.1 percent of the 138,626 farms in Georgia were farmed by their owners--while 31.5 percent were operated by share tenants and 13.4 percent by cash (renting) tenants.² By 1890

¹Gaston, Negro Wage Earner, pp. 60-61.

²Brooks, Agrarian Revolution, p. 57.

owners operated some 46.4 percent of Georgia's 171,071 farms; share tenants operated 36.4 percent and cash tenants 17.2 percent.¹

In addition to facing all the mighty problems endured by all farmers in post-war Georgia, Blacks faced a host of difficulties because of color. And wherever Blacks formed a large percentage of the population, as in the Black belt, they were less likely to emerge as landowners because of white opposition. Where land was less valuable and plentiful, however, whites gave Blacks better chances for ownership.²

But the financial barrier was Blacks' biggest problem in purchasing land. Money was in critically short supply, especially with Cleveland's insistence on the gold standard for America. For the most part Blacks--and whites--bought land in Georgia on terms requiring full payment in five to seven years; but extensions of the pay period were not unusual.³ By a common practice in Georgia of allowing the Black purchaser to pay interest on his notes year after, the Black, however, could remain on the land even though he made no effort to reduce the principal. Because of this practice, Black purchasers often fell into the practice of paying only the interest and did not try to obtain full ownership.⁴ Also peculiar sales situations, such as the all important difference between a bond for

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid., p. 61.

3

Preface to Peasantry, quoted in Gaston, "Negro Wage Earner", p. 59.

4

Gaston, "Negro Wage Earner", p. 59.

title and a title to the land, eluded the inexperienced, uneducated freedmen.¹ In addition to all these problems surrounding Black landownership, historians have noted a tendency in the newly freed ex-slaves to spend freely on extravagances, rather than saving to buy land. And whereas more Blacks in post bellum Georgia might have bought land had credit facilities been available to them, amassing savings in these hard times often took extreme patience, perseverance, and great effort.²

In spite of such handicaps and the pressures of the age, by 1874 Blacks' land holdings in Georgia totaled 338,769; by 1880 they totaled 586,664 acres; and by 1890, 967,234.³ And by taking a hand count of thirty-one counties considered typical for the state, one historian concluded that there were in 1874 2,974 Black landowners in Georgia; 5,968 Black landowners in 1880; and 13,623 Black landowners in 1890.⁴ By comparing census population figures for the same period, historians concluded that in 1880 less than one percent in Georgia's Black population owned property, and that in 1890 one and half percent of Blacks owned farm property.

The average size of the Black landowner's holdings in Georgia was 113.9 acres in 1873--as compared with an average of 338 acres held per

1

Ibid., p. 60

2

Ibid., pp. 65-66.

3

Comptroller General of Georgia Reports, quoted in Brooks, Agrarian Revolution, p. 43.

4

Economics of Land Tenure in Georgia, quoted in Brooks, Agrarian Revolution, p. 43.

capita by the total population of Georgia. The average size of Black holdings decreased, as did the average per capita holdings of Georgians, as a whole. By 1880 the average size of land plots owned by Blacks was 98.3 acres, as compared with a per capita average for Georgia of 188 acres. By 1890 the average size of Blacks' holdings was 71 acres.¹

In the cities Blacks made the striking advances most usually cited by historians for this period. For most of the Northern philanthropic agencies and schools were located in the cities--whereas rural Blacks had to depend more on their own self-help efforts and were more vulnerable to whites' opposition. At the dawning of the Populist period in 1891, there were 27 Black doctors and 4 Black lawyers practicing in the state. But as the doctors were located primarily in the more urbanized counties of the state, rural Blacks were either without medical help or they depended on white doctors.² By the end of the Populist period city Blacks would own over one-third of the total property owned by Georgia's Blacks.³

The condition of Georgia's rural Blacks during this period is however seldom treated except for descriptions of the racial patterns of tenancy and land ownership, and for Blacks' involvement in the Populist movement. One historian pointing to the fact that almost half of the state's Black farms were valued at less than a hundred dollars (and only ten percent were assessed at more than five hundred dollars), concluded

¹

Ibid., pp. 41, 43.

²

Bacote, "Negro Life in Georgia," p. 196.

³

Ibid., p. 194.

that for the era 'The plight of the Negro in the rural sections was depressing."¹ This observer further asserted, "Without political power, deprived of educational advantages, subject to all forms of proscriptive laws, and having little economic stake in the community, the rural Negro, especially the fieldhand, spent much of his time in the saloon. . . ."²

Though this was one view of rural Blacks' condition held by historians writing during the 1950's revival of interest in Southern Populism, it has since been amended, however, by county histories testifying to the diversity in rural conditions in Georgia and to the vitality of some of Georgia's rural Blacks during the era.³

To be sure, the majority of Georgia's Blacks--as well as whites--lived in the rural areas during this period (and well into the next century); but the percentage of Georgians working in agriculture decreased greatly in this period. By 1880 only 60 percent of Georgia's work force worked in agriculture,--as compared to 72 percent in 1870.⁴ By 1890 only 40 percent of Georgia's Black work force and 22 percent of the white were employed in agriculture.⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 195.

² Ibid.

³ For two divergent perspectives c.f. Marcellus C. Barksdale, "The Negro in Gainesville, Georgia (Hall County) as reflected in the Gainesville Press and Other Related Sources, 1897-1908" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1972); and Josie Walls, "Blacks of Meriwether, Georgia as Seen in the Meriwether Vindicator" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1971).

⁴ Range, Georgia Agriculture, p. 153.

⁵ U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Population, I, CXIV, 548.

CHAPTER II

THE BOURBON "SOLID SOUTH" FIGHT FOR GEORGIA IN

THE POST-RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

(Independency Threats Prior to the Rise of the Farmer's Alliance)--

During this post-Reconstruction period the Georgia farmer came, in 'solid South' politics, under the political domination (as well as the economic bondage) of the rising merchant class. In Georgia the new 'solid South' order was a fusion of the Democrats and of liberal Republican commercial interests. Called the New Departure or Bourbon region, it was "essentially a businessman's regime--dependent upon agriculture, but also on bankers, and merchants of the East (a fact more pressingly felt)."¹ For although the middle class farmers or "yeomen" remained the largest class of Georgians after the war, their interests were largely trodden down by the emergent commercial interests in Washington and in the Georgia government until the Farmer's Alliance legislature of 1890. Arnett noted that from 1872 to 1890 none of Georgia's governor's and only one of her senators were personally representative of interests of small or middle-class farmers, and only Governor Colquitt represented planters.² He further observed that "Even in the state legislature drawn from counties some 90-odd percent of which were overwhelmingly agrarian, the farmer remained an apparently diminishing minority."³

¹ Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 12.

² Ibid., 31-32.

³ Ibid., p. 32

At the helm of Georgia government was the Bourbon triumvirate of Joseph E. Brown, General John B. Gordon, and General Alfred H. Colquitt. During the period from 1872 to 1890 the governorship was held by either Gordon or Colquitt; and either Brown or Gordon held one of Georgia's senatorships--the other one was held by Colquitt after 1882.

Joseph E. Brown was a "selfmade man /who/ rose from backwoods poverty to political preferment and remarkable business success."¹ The small farmer vote had been the decisive factor which had put Brown in the governorship in 1857. A supporter of radical Reconstruction, Brown made many business contacts as the chief justice of the state under the Bullock administration which eventually led him to the presidency of the Southern Railway and Steamship Company, the Western and Atlantic Railway, the Dade Coal Company, the Walker Coal and Iron Company; and part-ownership of the Rising Fawn Iron Works. Brown's questionable contacts and his use of convict labor in the Dade Coal Company would especially bring him into conflict with the dissenting agrarian interests during the Eighties and the Nineties.

Devoutly religious and a true temperance advocate, Brown gave generously to religious, charitable, and educational institutions--a fact which helped ameliorate dissenters' protests that he "stooped to questionable means."²

General John B. Gordon, born in Pike county's neighboring county of

1

Ibid., p. 25.

2

Ibid., p. 28

Upson, was a true Democrat, a "newer type of Bourbon," and was rather sympathetic to independent movements. Second only to General Lee at Appomattox, Gordon was an anti-Reconstructionist leader and was alleged to have been a prominent figure in the Ku Klux Klan.¹ Gordon, who while in the United States Congress had little connection to the state Democratic machine, was a promoter of railroads and other corporations--and he was linked to corrupt railroad schemes.

General Alfred H. Colquitt was the only true planter and aristocrat among the high ranking Bourbon leaders. He kept his ante-bellum plantation productive with the help of good business skills and the almost worshipful attitude his ex-slaves had toward him.² For a period of time he was also a railroad promoter.

In this post Reconstruction period in the land where blood and violence continued to be poured out for so many centuries of a cruel, inhuman slave system, the uncompromising "solid South" order became as universal in the South as the fear which spawned it. But there were challenges to the order.

One challenge was the "Patrons of Husbandry", which became known as the Grange. This farm movement was organized in the South 1866-1867 by a federal records agent who sympathized with the plight of the small white Southern farmer. At first the aim of the order, which soon spread to the North and West, was the social and cultural uplift of the farmer, but it

1

Ibid., p. 30.

2

Ibid., p. 31.

later sought to influence local legislation to better its members' condition.

The Grange arrived in Georgia in 1872, and by 1875, Georgia had the largest membership, approximately 18,000, of all South Atlantic states. In Georgia, as in other sections of the country, the Grange attacked the local merchant and middleman by establishing cooperative enterprises and by patronizing wholesale buying and selling agencies. It attacked the railroads for rate discriminations and losses from bond forfeitures, and it fought the evils of the convict lease system.

The Grange Constitution was silent concerning the membership of Blacks--leaving the matter to the local chapter. In 1874 one observer noted there were no Blacks in Southern Granges, but some exceptions existed in the middle, New England, and Northern states.¹

For Blacks the correspondent Council of Laborers was founded by whites. "Two respectable white men," Grange members, served as advisers in each subordinate body.²

Local opposition to the Grange was sometimes fierce. It was detested by local merchants and commission men and many mortgages were foreclosed because grantees were members of the order. Where Blacks were concerned, local Granges were accused of being adjuncts of the Ku Klux Klan and of taking wage and labor actions which tended to "reduce the colored people again to a condition of servitude."³

¹Theodore Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South 1865-1933 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 35.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

The Granger movement failed in Georgia about 1876 for insolvency in many cooperative enterprises which had to operate on a cash basis; its inability to make an artificial shortage in farmers' supplies in order to raise prices; and because many of its legislative programs were inacted by the parties in power. In Georgia the Grange's movement for state regulation of the railroads helped bring about the Constitutional Convention of 1877.¹

Though not nearly so effective in the South as in the Western sections, the Grange did set a precedent for greater assaults upon the Solid South. But in the main it was the pressing hard times and constantly worsening lot of the small Georgia farmer which kept the seeds of discord alive.

In 1874, the forerunner of 1890's Populism in Georgia, the Independent Movement, a more purely political movement than the Grange, arose in the northern part of the state--in a region of small farmers "strongly opposed to any 'ruling class'."² This mountainous section of mostly isolated, primitive farms and a few larger towns had supported Southern arms but opposed secession--some contingents even remaining Unionists. Here "social conditions and standards were too crude for the masses to place much value upon that type of respectability to which unfailing support of the regular Democracy was elsewhere regarded as essential."³ Also, white

1

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 36.

2

Ibid., p. 33.

3

Ibid.

solidarity was a less binding force in this region where Blacks formed only 33 percent of the population.

In 1874 objection was raised to this mountainous region's congressional candidate because of his Atlanta-based selection and backing. Dr. William H. Felton entered the race against the Party candidate as an Independent. Felton, the "archinsurgent of the era," was a farmer, Methodist preacher, and county doctor.

After the fierce campaign which gave his district the name of the 'bloody seventh', Felton was re-elected to the Congress in 1876 and in 1878. In 1878 and in 1880, Independent Democrat Emory Speer went to Congress from the ninth district of the mountain section; but, nevertheless the party's ascendancy waned between 1882 and 1884, as members drifted back into old party channels.¹

A similar, 'ominous' split as had occurred in the Democratic party in the state's northern districts began to threaten throughout the state in 1880. Amid cries of political sell-out, Governor Colquitt had appointed Joe Brown as Gordon's replacement in the Senate (Gordon retired to further his business interests.) The governor was also under attack for endorsing Northeastern rail bonds despite 1874 legislation, for other questionable appointments, for the high taxes he had levied, and for his responsibility in helping perpetuate the shameful convict lease system.

The scourge of Black people and poor whites, the convict lease system allowed for the continuance of barbaric slavery practices in often

¹ Ibid., p. 33; History of Georgia 1850-1881, quoted in Reddick, "Negro in Populist Movement," p. 12.

deplorable working conditions. Dr. Felton denounced the convict lease system as devilish and barbarous: "Juveniles and old, hardened criminals, men and women, black and white, the obdurate and unconquerable are all huddled and chained together."¹ Joseph Brown, Colquitt's contested Senate appointee, was attacked by reformists for exploiting convict labor at his Dade Coal Mines, where he paid the state "something over 6¢ per working day for the convicts, whom he worked in his mines for 10 to 12 hours a day" until even those restrictions were removed by the 1876 legislature.²

Amid so much disfavor, Colquitt was unable to rally the necessary 2/3 majority for nomination at the Democratic Convention in 1880. A serious challenge arose over the refusal of the Convention to abide by its own 2/3 rule, and a "youthful delegate, scant, red-haired and freckled-faced, gave voice to the rising spirit of insurgency in an impassioned outburst. . . ."³--Tom Watson, a young lawyer from McDuffie County, began in that nominating hall a career which would eventually make him one of the most hated and beloved men in the history of the nation.

Though Independents like Dr. Felton had shown their ability to deal deep blows to the ruling power, Tom Watson was destined to lead a movement which would in the 1890's shake the Solid South at its very foundation; racism. Because of the political union of Blacks and poor whites he would

¹
Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 60.

²
Ibid.

³
Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 41.

seek to forge, Watson's life would be in jeopardy and he would come to know the all-prevading condemnation and wrath of a people and class desperate to maintain a semblance of the Old South to which he had been born. In Pike county it would be said of him, "Watson has done more harm to Georgia in the last few years than all the other bad influences put together."¹

Historians have often sought in the formation of this Southern farmer's son explanation for Watson's peculiar attitudes and actions against tradition and class he had been taught was sacrosanct.² This researcher consulted several sources and especially his two widely divergent biographies--for glimpses into the man who would become a symbol of the 1890's beleaguered generation in the South.

Edward Thomas Watson, who as a young man changed his name to Thomas Edward, was the son of a Thomson, Georgia farmer. The family was of English Quaker ancestry, and in the grandfather generation they apparently belonged to the planter class.³ But by all descriptions of Tom's father's economic assets after the war, it would seem that by then the family belonged to the "small white farmer" or "yoeman class." The yoemen were the bulk of rural white society--with large planters and the unfortunate

1

P. Journal, 18 October 1894.

2

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 114.

3

"The Conservative South--A Political Myth," quoted in Francis M. Wilhoit, "An Interpretation of Populism's Impact on the Georgia Negro," The Journal of Negro History, LII (April, 1967), 118.

shielded asthmatic, highly nervous young Tom from the father's wrath, it was at Aunt Mandy's that the boy found a place to read, think, and get away from noise.¹

Tom and Mrs. Bugg apparently had a lifelong friendship and he supported her in her old age. Mrs. Bugg furthermore recalled to one of Watson's biographers, " . . . dere wuz times when nobody could do nothing wid him but me."²

As a youth, Tom Watson had watched his father break under the strain of the post-war days. The elder Watson, apparently despondent over war experiences and the fact of being reduced to working his own land, turned to drink and gambling. His family would eventually sink into dire poverty; Tom would always remember that 'My father used to be virtually paralyzed for weeks by what he called 'the blues'.'³

Tom Watson suffered much with bouts of asthma and with nervous disorders, but he also always had a 'tyrannical streak'.⁴ He was given to violent outbursts and petulance and began in childhood a pattern of getting into fights and scrapes.⁵ But clearly the post-bellum years were marked by much violence, anxiety, and instability in the society. During

1

Ibid., p. 8.

2

Ibid., p. 7.

3

Ibid., p. 376

4

Ibid., pp. 26-27.

5

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 20.

many phases of his life Tom like many others in his generation carried a pistol to protect himself. Even during his early years as a young lawyer, Watson had more than one fight right in the courtroom.¹ His brother William revealed that Tom hated to see punishment inflicted upon anything that was helpless and "wanted a thrashing given their overseer, once, for beating a negro boy who worked on his father's farm. . . ."2

In the hard years of suffering, humiliation, and manual labor which came to be his and his family's lot, Watson learned what it meant to come under class oppression.

The prodigious intellectual mental efforts and study which Watson undertook in childhood and throughout most of his life would lead him out of this hard lot however. Matriculating at Mercer University due to his mother's struggles and his deep commitment to education, Tom, with 'swagger' and 'grit' that covered his feelings of inferiority, worked hard and devoted himself to oratory training as a member of the Mercer debating society.³ His family's poverty, for so long a source of much humiliation and distress for him, was finally abated when his great struggle for an education culminated in a career at the bar. In 1878 he was able to take them out of the "wretched shack on a place of sandy soil"--the condition to which they had come to when the father sunk into a 'hopeless stupor'.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 42.

²Brewton, Thomas E. Watson, p. 24.

³Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 28.

⁴Ibid., p. 44.

As a young man Watson had once experienced religious conversion in a 'revival', but it is not clear what his true religious beliefs were during the 1890's period, when he opened many of his political meetings with prayer, an action suggestive of Farmers Alliance meetings.¹ But during his stormy later years as the vindictive Hickory Hill demagogue who had helped orchestrate the disfranchising of Blacks in Georgia, Watson declared he was not "what the French call a religionist." And in C. Vann Woodward's opinion, Watson's impatience toward the clergy of "whatever persuasion" was rooted in his belief in the Deism of Voltaire and Jefferson.² But toward the end of his life, Tom Watson, who was to champion prohibition in the 1890's, turned to drink.³ He had been plunged into despair and further depressions when the death of his last daughter came a week after the government clamped down on his magazine (for its attack on President Wilson), and there followed in the same year the tragic death of his alcoholic son.⁴

Woodward concluded that the beleaguered Southern farmers of the 1890's were so attracted to Watson's style of inflammatory slander because "a frustrated man and a frustrated class found that their desires and needs

1

Atlanta Journal, quoted in Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 41; People's Party, Paper, 7 July 1893, 27 October 1893.

2

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 41.

3

Ibid., p. 459.

4

Ibid.

were complimentary."¹ Watson's own conclusions about himself would give some indication of the extent of the frustration which tore at the man who became the symbol of Southern Populist revolt in the 1890's. Writing to his wife in 1883 about his own son--whom he was known to indulge--the man so beset with the pressures of his generation, of alcoholism in the family, and nervous disorders concluded,

. . . Had I been trained /with patience, firmness, sympathetic understanding/ . . . a very different man would be sitting here tonight . . . On my heart there would not be the scar which many a trial has left there; and my memory would be rid of many a bitter recollection. I have imagined enemies where there were none: been tortured by indignities which were the creatures of my own fancy, and have magnified the gloom of every reverse . . .

The better part of me is poisoned. A mistaken training leaves a trace from which there is no escape. Between the warp and woof of my life its busy shuttle will carry the black thread till the loom stops.

Had I been firmly governed and not with fitful harshness: had I not been abused, ridiculed, mocked and scorned there would be sunshine where now is shadow. I could have joined the companionships of the world, shared its loves, laughs, friendships and aspirations. As it is I stand where my boyhood put me, fed by my own hopes, scourged by my own troubles.

A sensitive spirit wounded by those who should have nurtured, sees all things in a false color, is proud of its own isolation, magnifies its defects, is unfitted for the intercourse of the world and as far as the necessities will allow retires within itself and imagines that all others are more fortunate, more deserving and more happy /sic/. Words fail to describe such a misfortune. A presence that poisons every joy, stains every beauty, checks every impulse. A shadow that follows like a hungry wolf. . . .²

Tom Watson came into focus in state politics after his speech against Colquitt's candidacy at the 1880 Democratic convention. In the bitter

¹Ibid., p. 419.

2

Letter, Tom Watson to Mrs. Thomas E. Watson, August 4, 1883, in possession of Georgia D. Watson, quoted in Woodward, Tom Watson, pp. 17-18.

campaign of 1880, Watson would, among other things, reveal his tendency toward unorthodox and contradictory stances on race. His attack on Colquitt's role in perpetuating the convict lease system was well received by Blacks. But Watson also accused Joseph Brown of "having done more to invest the negro with the use of suffrage, and to install members of his race in offices . . . than any Yankee had ever tried to do during Reconstruction."¹ In that hotly contested campaign, Watson would also accuse Gordon and his regulars of negating all of "their good work in the Ku Klux Klan" by inviting Blacks to vote for them.²

The insurgent wing of the party, which Watson came to represent, ran their own gubernatorial candidate, Thomas M. Norwood, in this particularly bitter campaign and election marked by Ku Klux Klan methods and carpet-bagger practices--and by the resurrection of the Black vote. And by various means the Black vote was brought to the support of Colquitt and gave him the victory.³

Hence, it was from his near demise from Georgia politics that the Black voter, by the same corrupt methods which had forced him out, was brought back into the political forefront as an ominous balance of power faction. The import of the 1880 election sounded alarm through the 'solid South'.

¹
Brewton, Thomas E. Watson, p. 142.

²
Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine, quoted in Reddick, "Negro in the Populist Movement," p. 21.

³
Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 81; Arnett, Populist Movement, pp. 42-43.

In 1882 Tom Watson, who owned considerable land and had a booming law practice, ran in McDuffie county for a seat in the Georgia legislature. Preceded by a campaign in which Watson weaved in and out of efforts to appease the white vote and openly court the Black vote, a Watson landslide victory followed barndances for Blacks at which the Georgia lawyer had played the fiddle alongside Black musicians.¹

Apparently after 1882, however, both the state independent movement and the farmer discontent which Watson represented went into dormancy. But the import of the Black voter's resurrection was clear. The Griffin News printed a fateful Rome Courier warning to the 'solid South':

. . . the 'solid' array of the colored voters of the South on the Republican side has been broken . . .

While this breaking up of the nearly solid negro phalanx is a matter of congratulation, we see in it, at the same time, a foreboding of danger to the 'solid' Democracy of the South. It is too natural and reasonable a sequence to be doubted, that the solidarity of the negroes on the Republican side has had too much to do with the maintenance of the solidity of the whites on the Democratic side. The danger is that, this pressure being removed, ambitious or factious men, setting up 'independent' standards, may be more successful hereafter in dividing the Democratic vote than they have heretofore been.²

During the 1880's apparently a mood of "passive submission" characterized the mass of Georgia's farmers.³ This submissiveness in the face

1

Brewton, Thomas E. Watson, pp. 157-65.

2

Rome Courier, quoted in the Griffin Daily News and Sun, 13 August 1886. (Hereafter the Griffin Daily News and Sun will be referred to as the Griffin News.)

3

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 75.

of increasing poverty might have been due in part to the introduction in Congress of a Republican bill designed to prevent Democrat Grover Cleveland's presidency from in any way effecting disfranchisement of Southern Blacks. The dreaded "Force Bill," which would have placed federal elections in the South under federal supervision, apparently not only effected the Georgia farmers' submissiveness in the 1880's, but it might also have been instrumental in keeping state Farmer's Alliancemen from dividing on other issues until the bill was defeated in 1891.¹

But also during the 1880's a brutal, bloody Southern "ritual" of horror and wrath began to occur in an ominous pattern. Lynchings were on the rise!

One more significant foreshadowing of the Nineties was the fact that in 1880 Georgia poet Sidney Lanier, suffering from a war-incurred lung ailment, made one of the last significant gestures of his brief life in that he called for a united front of Black and white farmers. According to Populist historian Gerald Gaither, the political implications of Lanier's predictions of the "obliteration of the color line" was a philosophical forerunner of the general philosophy of Populist propagandists.² But by 1881 Lanier was dead at the age of thirty-nine--and the "torch" would fall to Tom Watson.

During the 1880's Tom Watson moved closer to outright rebellion against the Bourbon Democrats, while Atlanta Constitution New South

¹

Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Reddick, p. 27.

²Gerald Gaither, Blacks and The Populist Revolt (Ballots and Bigotry in the New South) (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1977), p. 96.

prophet Henry Grady extolled the creed of urban wealth and materialism. Grady also advocated the elimination of Blacks from political life.

Also in the Eighties when the price of cotton was low and many Georgia farmers became thoroughly disheartened, Pike county, situated in almost the geographic center of Georgia, was on a dangerous political course which reflected anything but farmer submissiveness. In Pike the post-war generation of Georgians which had seen little rest from social upheavals, migrations, poverty, and violence was embroiled throughout the Eighties in a great and bitter struggle which apparently was resolved only after the coming of the Farmer's Alliance (in 1888). The independent prohibition movement which erupted in Pike in 1884 brought great division to the society, great unrest, and pathetic scenes of ragged Blacks being herded like so many cattle to the polls to be voted by white overseers. But this Populist precursor movement also brought what might have been the only instances of truly integrated Southern white-Southern Black interracial politics in that post-Reconstruction middle Georgia society.

For a closer look at the dynamics of that society in the era of the racially progressive prohibition revolt the following chapter is given.

1

Woodward, Tom Watson, pp. 105-106.

CHAPTER III

THE POPULIST PRECURSOR PROHIBITION MOVEMENT IN PIKE AND ADJOINING COUNTIES

In the 1880's Blacks outnumbered whites in Pike county. In 1884, for example, a census report on cotton production showed Pike's white population was 7,780 and the Black population 8,069.¹ But Pike whites outnumbered Blacks at the polls. In 1884, for example, white polls (with defaulters) in that county totaled 1,366 and Black polls with defaulters totaled 999; however, in this period of a revolutionary revival of Black voting, Black registration increased and by 1886 white polls with defaulters were 1,376 and Black polls with defaulters were 1070.²

These 1880's tax digest polls figures are questionable, however, as during the 1890's--when Pike politics were as centered on Blacks as they were in the 1880's--discrepancies between the tax digest polls and the census figures could be remarked.³ The discrepancy could be explained,

1

U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Report on Cotton Production in the United States, 1884: II, 110.

2

Pike County, Ga. Tax Digest (1884, 1886).

3

The discrepancies are more graphic for the 1890's period as the 1890's census (the Eleventh Census) delineated population according to age and race. In 1890, for example, tax digest polls figures showed 1,407 white polls with defaulters and 1,184 Black polls with defaulters. The 1890 census showed, however, that there was a total of 1,766 white females and males over twenty-one years of age in Pike. And whereas women were not franchised during this era, the polls of white males, 1,329, would indicate that there were either significant errors in the census or that the tax digest for white males in this age category

however, by considerable evidence of corrupt polling practices in the Pike area during the 1880's and the 1890's.

But aside from the radical politics of the 1880's, Pike county seemed like a rather typical cotton belt county in this vital era preceding Populism. In 1880 there were some 1,348 farms in Pike county and the average size of a farm was 134.3 acres.¹ The population of Barnesville, Pike largest town, was 1,962 in 1880.² And whereas the census figures for small municipalities were not delineated by race in 1880, Blacks were 34 percent of Barnesville's population of 754 in 1870 and were 47.4 percent of the town's population in 1900.³

To derive a picture of occupations in Pike in 1880, the writer counted all Pike occupants reported at the tenth census. From that hand count the following charts of occupations were derived:

greatly outnumbered their white female counterpart age group (a highly improbable possibility, as the more detailed Twelfth Census showed that there were in both races in Pike about as many women as men in this age category). And although the census figures for 1890 suggested that the 1890 tax digest figures 'inflated' Pike white polls, they in the same fashion suggested tax digest polls of Pike Blacks were likewise inflated. The discrepancy between tax digest polls and census figures was, furthermore remarked for four counties adjoining 'black belt' Pike, a fact which suggested that in addition to conditions cited above for discrepancies, the legal voting age might have been lower than twenty-one in this middle Georgia section.

1

U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of The United States, 1880: Report Upon Statistics of Agriculture, VII, 110.

2

Fish and Lambdin, Lamar County, p. 23.

3

U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of The United States, 1870: Compendium, 145, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, pp. 578, 612

PIKE COUNTY WHITE LABOR FORCE AT THE TENTH CENSUS 1880 (Gainful and Unpaid Workers)

MALES

architect.....	1	day laborer.....	4	machinist.....	8
artist.....	2	dentist.....	1	mail carrier.....	1
bank clerk.....	2	druggist.....	4	manufacturer.....	5
banker.....	1*	dry goods.....	1	manure maker.....	1
barber.....	2	(proprietor)		mechanic.....	3
bartender.....	3	dry goods merchant..	5	merchant.....	20
bar & restaurant...	1	express agent &		milller.....	12*
blacksmith.....	11	postmaster.....	2	millwright.....	5
book agent.....	4	factory worker.....	1	minister.....	11*
bookkeeper.....	2	farmer.....	1102***	painter.....	7
broker.....	1	(farm) laborer.....	844**	physician.....	20*
works in		works on farm.....	1	plasterer,	
blacksmith's.....	2	fireman.....	1	brick mason.....	1
bootblack.....	1	foundry worker.....	1*	policeman.....	1
boot maker.....	3	general store.....	5	printer.....	3
buggy maker.....	4	(proprietor)		publisher.....	1
buggy trimmer.....	5	grocer & grocery		R & R:	
works in buggy shop.	1	clerk.....	12	agent.....	4*
cabinet maker.....	1	hardware mechanic...	1	clerk.....	1
carriage painter...	1	hansler.....	1	employee.....	2
carpenter.....	20	harness maker		engineer.....	2
census enumerator..	1	& apprentice.....	9	laborer.....	2
chairmaker.....	2	hotel clerk.....	2	section boss....	1
clerk.....	2	fire & life in-		supervisor.....	1
clerk (court).....	1	surance agent.....	1	sawmill worker....	10
clerk in store.....	34	iron moulder.....	1	servant.....	1
clothing merchant..	2	jailer.....	1	shoemaker,	
city marshal.....	2*	jeweler.....	5	shoe shop worken	2
confectioner.....	2	jugmaker.....	1	stable (worker,	
cotton buyer.....	1	justice of peace....	1	proprietor.....	2
cigar maker.....	1	lawyer.....	15	tailor.....	1
county sheriff.....	1	livery man.....	2	tanner.....	2

teaching music.....	1
teaching school.....	23*
teaching writing.....	1
trader.....	1
telegraph operator...	1
typesetter.....	1
warehouseman.....	5
wheelwright.....	4

FEMALES

cook.....	5
dressmaker.....	8
farmer.....	72
farm laborer.....	139
general store	
(proprietress).....	1
keeping hotel.....	1
keeping house.....	1281
keeping store.....	1
knitter.....	1
milinery.....	8
nurse.....	1
seamstress.....	4
servant.....	9
teaching school.....	16
weaving.....	4

*includes one worker
counted elsewhere

PIKE COUNTY BLACK LABOR FORCE AT THE TENTH CENSUS 1880
 (Gainful and Unpaid Workers)- Continued

MALES			FEMALES		
	black	mulatto		black	mulatto
barber.....	1	2*	basketwoman.....	1	
blacksmith.....	25	3	cook.....	33	3
carpenter.....	5	1	cook at hotel.....	1	
cook in hotel.....	1		day laborer.....	2	
cook in restaurant...	1		dressmaker.....		1
day laborer.....	1	1	farmer.....	12	
ditcher.....	2		farm laborer.....	1413	89
drayman.....	2	1	keeping house.....	597	195
farmer.....	404	30	milk maid.....	1	
farm laborer.....	1642	128	nurse.....	5	1
brick & rock mason...	1		servant.....	152	31
rock mason.....	2	2	teaching school....	2	3
minister.....	8*	4	washing, ironing...	19	11
painter.....	2	1			
plasterer.....	3				
R & R worker.....	6				
servant.....	65	2			
shoemaker.....	4	1			
teaching school.....		3			
tanning.....		1			
well digger.....	3	1			
wheelwright.....	3				
works in hotel.....		1			
works in shoe shop...	1	1			

* includes one worker counted elsewhere

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census,
Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Georgia, vol. 18.

Where Pike Blacks are concerned, and whites, the picture presented by these statistics is probably a somewhat 'classic' picture of Georgia's 'black belt' in this post-Reconstruction period. Some eighty-five percent of the Pike work force were employed in agriculture, whereas in the state as a whole only sixty percent of the work force was engaged in agriculture in 1880.¹ But in Barnesville, Pike's largest town, only sixty-one percent of the work force was in agriculture.

Regarding the agricultural work force, the 1880's census from which these statistics were extrapolated made a distinction between the categories of "farmer" and "farm laborer."²

According to the census statistics there were, notably, some seventy-two white women in Pike in the "farmer" category--whereas only 12 Black women had reached this status in 1880. And although it is not clear how many of these Black and white "farmer" women owned their land in 1880, it will be seen that in the 1890's a few Black women had farm land and other assets to the extent that they were in the category of the county's

1

Range, Georgia Agriculture, p. 153.

2

In this regard it may be assumed that by "farmer" was meant farm landowners and tenant farmers, as by E. M. Banks' estimation of the number of Black farm owners in Georgia in 1880, the number of Pike Black "farmers" given by the census would have been too large to be only Black farm owners. (Economics of Land Tenure in Georgia, quoted in Brooks, Agrarian Revolution, p. 43). In regard to the tenant farmers it should be remembered that cash tenants rented from landlords and were economically more "upwardly mobile"--as well as being freer from landlord supervision. The share tenants, on the other hand, were more subject to supervision and less frequently gained ownership of the land.

Concerning the Pike agricultural workforce it should also be noted that the 1880 census raw data included child farm workers of different ages, but those ten years and above were the only ones included in the statistics given in the chart as such restriction as to age was made in summaries of later census periods. And regarding the large numbers of

most "well-to-do" Blacks.

Also by these statistics it can be seen that some 82.5 percent of all working white women were keeping house and only 18 percent were engaged in agriculture. On the other hand, 59 percent of Black working women were engaged in agriculture and 30 percent were keeping house. Concerning the percentage of Black women keeping house it should be noted that this figure perhaps reflected a post-war trend in the South for Black men to withdraw their women from the fields.

Concerning other occupations of the Pike populace, it should be remarked that in 1880 Blacks were apparently dependent on white physicians. And although there were six Black nurses (including one mulatto) in the county, there was only one white nurse. Also whereas there were some forty-one white teachers in Pike in 1880, there were only eight Black teachers (all Black male teachers were mulattoes)--although the total Black population outnumbered the white in 1880. These teacher statistics, furthermore, help indicate the degree to which the period between 1880 and the demise of Populism in 1896 marked high growth for Black schools and Black education in Pike, as by 1895 there would be at least twenty-six Black teachers in Pike (and at least forty-seven white teachers).¹

It should also be noted that according to the census statistics the overwhelming majority of all servants in Pike (some 250 out of 260) were Black and lived mostly in the Barnesville area--a fact which would have

children who worked in agriculture in Pike and throughout the South during the post-Reconstruction period, it will be seen that this was a great handicap to the children's efforts to get an education during the 1890's period in particular.

¹ Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner of Georgia to the General Assembly (1895), n.p.

given Barnesville's Black and white populations a somewhat different identity from the Pike Black and white populations outside of Barnesville.

The chart indicates that Blacks had a monopoly not only on the servant labor force in Pike, but also the majority of cooks, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and plasterers in the county were Black. Also Blacks apparently had a complete monopoly on the dangerous occupation of well-digging. It can furthermore be assumed by this picture and the sparsity of Black teachers in the county in 1880, that the advantage Pike Blacks held in certain trades was a carry-over from the slave period, when Blacks were often engaged as blacksmiths and skilled laborers in the South.¹ It will be seen however that by the time of the educational awakening of the 1890's, Blacks were going to trade schools, as were whites, for skilled trades. It will also be seen that by the 1890's, the coming trend of white resentment of Black trade skills was in evidence in Pike county.

Contrary to the uncomplicated picture portrayed by these statistics on occupations in Pike in 1880, the ensuing era would be a devastating one for Pike county, as shortly after the October election of 1884, thirty-five buildings in Barnesville burned down in an appalling conflagration ignited when a spark from a passing locomotive fell on a bale of cotton. According to two county historians' report, "A brisk breeze was blowing . . . The blaze that at first could have been covered by a man's hat leaped from bale to bale of cotton, then onto the frame buildings nearby. Before the day closed thirty-five buildings were in ashes."² The same

¹ Gaston, "Negro Wage Earner", pp. 227-28.

² Fish and Lambdin, Lamar County, p. 34.

historians noted, however, that "The spirit that caused the town to overcome the effects of war and the indignities of Reconstruction" helped it rebuild in the 1880's.¹

During the 1880's, the election of Democrat Grover Cleveland to the White House brought exultation to the people of Barnesville. Another occasion brought even thousands of people from the countryside into Barnesville during the Eighties. Jefferson Davis, the ex-President of the Confederacy, the man around whom centered all the mystique of the Lost Cause, was passing through Barnesville on what would be his last tour of the once proud Confederacy. By the time of Davis' visit great joy was felt in Barnesville whereas the year before there had been consternation: an earthquake had shaken Barnesville and sections throughout the Southwestern states. Barnesville was not damaged but Charleston, South Carolina was hard hit.²

The tumultuous independent movement began to take shape in Pike in 1883, when the Georgia legislature approved the Local Option Act giving counties and municipalities the right to enforce prohibition as they saw fit. It was left to Pike only to vote on the issue. But the issue was liquor. For an understanding of how liquor could unleash a raging political struggle in a society and even subvert the 'sacred' cause of white solidarity, the following articles from the Pike County Journal are presented. They form a collage of everyday images and insights on

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid., pp. 34-35.

the liquor problem after the 1880's, when the county had already moved from 'dry' to 'wet', from political strife to violent crime--from prohibition to Populism:

"'Letters to Preachers' by Zeke Johnson"

. . . I have known some /preachers/ to drink whiskey as a beverage while they pretended to preach temperance to other people . . . If /a preacher/ cannot leave off useless dissipation, at least while he is in the house of God . . . then let him, for the sake of Christianity, leave the pulpit. . . .¹

"A Negro Shot"

Marshall /sic/ Graham shot negro . . . on the street last Saturday about eight o'clock. The negro was drunk and cursing.²

About a doz. & half of inhabitants of the Second district of Pike went down to Macon yesterday to testify against each other for distilling. The rest of them had to stay home to run the stills.³

And in an article portraying the violence which often occurred at Black church "frolics" during the 1890's, the Journal thus depicted one tragic victim in the great toll liquor took in this generation in Pike county, Georgia:

The negroes in the neighborhood of Hollonville had a picnic on Saturday last at shoal creek, and as usual mean liquor and the pocket pistol came in for their part in the program.

Mr. Patton and a young man in passing, stopped near the church for a few minutes to see what was going on, when a negro came up and commenced to abuse and curse Mr. Patton, saying that he supposed he came there to arrest him. Mr. Patton protesting that he had not, but the negro continued to abuse him until other negroes carried him off. He returned

¹

P. Journal, 27 January 1892.

²

P. Journal, 5 February 1891.

³

Griffin News, quoted in the P. Journal, 17 January 1896.

and while attempting to draw a pistol from his pocket, the hammer of which hung, Mr. Patton shot five times, four of the shots taking effect and killing the negro instantly.

An inquest was held on Sunday, and after a thorough investigation, and upon evidence mainly obtained from negro witnesses, who were present at the killing, the jury rendered a verdict of justifiable homicide.¹

During the Eighties era in Pike, as throughout the land, women could not vote, but "most were deeply desirous of ridding the county of bar-rooms." In a bitter election battle in July of 1884 local option law came into effect in Pike and barrooms boarded their doors.

The battle over liquor was so fierce that it tore apart the 'solid South' order in Pike. One county historian wrote, "The bitter feeling engendered split the county Democratic Party into two divisions, the Prohibitionist Democrats and the Anti-prohibition Democrats, each running candidates for election. . . ."2

The test of the new splinter Democrats' strength came quickly. And it would soon evident that Ku Klux Klan efforts in Pike had been reversed as Blacks were catapulted into the role of a factional balance of power.

In October of 1880 the county elected representatives to the Georgia Assembly. With 2,066 votes cast in one race, the anti-prohibitionist nominee won by a slim margin of 42 votes; and out of 2,039 votes cast in another contest, the regular Democrat also won--by 67 votes.³

An article in the earlier decade's newspaper, the Pike County News,

¹
P. Journal, 30 June 1893.

²
Mitchell, Pike County, p. 15.

³
Griffin News, 5 October 1880.

appeared in the Griffin News, and lamented the fact that the prohibitionists were going to contest the election. The 1880's Pike News, could not understand on what grounds the election would be contested "as printed defaulters list made up from the late contest, was kept at each precinct, and no man whose name was on this list was allowed to vote unless he produced his tax receipts which was done in many instances."¹

There is an indication in the Pike article that Blacks of the county favored prohibition in 1884, but did not vote in large numbers for according to the News,

Only twenty-two negroes voted at the 2nd district, twenty of whom voted for Hunt and Matthews /prohibitionists/ and two for Gardner and Baker. If the negroes voted the same way everywhere, it would seem that the Democrats were on the side of the anti-prohibitionists.²

One evidence that the prohibition issue had caused a great schism in the society is found in the Griffin News' admonition: "We fail to see what good is to be gained by the heat and strife of another contest over a question that has already produced most deplorable dissensions in our neighboring county. . . ."³

It should be noted that the Griffin News, the only available source on the independent, prohibitionist movement in Spalding's adjoining county, took an antiprohibitionist stance during the Eighties. When local option was voted on in Spalding in 1886 (for the first time) the Griffin

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Ibid.

newspaper published effusive arguments against prohibition; but in the next decade, in 1895, Griffin went from a 'wet' county to a 'dry' one. In the hard fought Griffin contest over prohibition in 1886, Blacks—who apparently had prohibitionist or anti-Democratic sympathies—were used to sway the vote. In one revealing account a newspaper called the Orthodox Democrat was quoted in the Griffin News:

The prohibitionists in Spalding are attempting to influence the colored vote by appointing negroes on their executive committee. Taffy and bribes are their usual methods before the election, but after the election they begin to cast about to see how many negro votes they can throw out.¹

Despite such white Democratic opposition, the 1880's would mark a period of revolutionary Black involvement in politics in the Pike area. Josie Spencer Roberts Wall noted concerning the decade of the Eighties in adjoining Meriwether County, "In the election of 1882 Negroes were most active . . . Negroes campaigned and voted in subsequent elections. At times they opposed white men who later became governors of Georgia. By 1886, however, Negro voter participation had almost dwindled to nothing."² The explanation for the brevity of a nearby Meriwether Blacks' period of ascendancy' lay in the fact that Blacks were a smaller percentage of that county's population (44-4/5 percent in 1890) than they were in Pike, and Meriwether Blacks remained strictly Republican throughout the period. They vied for the few Republican appointments to federal positions in the South. When, however, a Meriwether Black was being considered

¹

Orthodox Democrat, quoted in the Griffin News, 22 May 1886.

²

Wall, "Blacks of Meriwether, " p. 12.

for a position as census taker in 1899, whites of the county found the choice so 'obnoxious' that Washington allowed them to bar the appointment.¹ But in 1897 when a Meriwether Black was appointed to a postmaster position, whites attempted to assassinate him. They burned his post office, and when he opened one in the Black district, they boycotted it. (The subsequent blockade of the mail to Meriwether was curtailed with the coming of the Spanish American War.) One notable feature of the racial outbreak was the fact that the religious, rather racially liberal editor of the Meriwether Vindicator, Marshall Douglass Staunton, justified whites' brutality with his interpretations of the Bible and of history.²

In addition to this 1890's pattern of Meriwether whites' violent reprisals against Black Republicans, Blacks in that adjoining Pike area county had a somewhat different economic profile from Pike Blacks. It is noteworthy, for example, that Meriwether's class of Black landowners contained a few who, unlike their counterparts in neighboring 'black belt' Pike, owned land tracts far in excess of the average of acres owned by Georgia Blacks during the period. One Meriwether Black even owned 2,900 acres, which contained a 1,200 acre lot which he paid \$3,500 for--in cash!³

Though Meriwether Blacks would reject the Populists in the next decade and would be used by whites as 'bloc-busters' only on a few occasions,

¹Clarence A. Bacote, "Negro Officeholders in Georgia Under President McKinley," the Journal of Negro History, XLIV (July, 1959), 223.

²Editorial, Meriwether Vindicator, 1 October 1897.

³Wall, "Blacks of Meriwether," p. 33.

their period of eclipse in the 1880's saw in neighboring Pike the increasing use of Blacks to settle the great feud which had broken out among white factions.

In the election for county officers in 1885, all Pike's Democratic candidates were elected except one. He was defeated by the same Captain J. H. Mitchell, who in 1887 and in 1889 would be elected to the legislature from Pike; but in 1889 he would be elected with Thomas Barrett, on the Farmer's Alliance ticket--though Pike's representation would be reduced and Mitchell would not be seated.¹ Along with another soon-to-be Populist named Murphey, Barrett, a name which would set the races aflame during the 1890's, appeared on the prohibitionist ballot for representative in the 1886 election.²

The campaign and election of 1886 apparently marked a climactic point in the Pike area prohibition movement and produced both fateful and revolutionary developments for Blacks. One crucial meeting in the important Spalding campaign to institute prohibition may have inspired the charge that Blacks were being bribed with prohibitionist executive committee positions, but it also produced an evidence of truly interracial politics in the Pike area. To the meeting to which "all conservative citizens" had been invited to the Griffin courthouse, a crowd of about 150 whites and Blacks sought the nomination of a candidate to the state legislature, who would "if elected use his ability to free this county

¹
Mitchell, Pike County, p. 16.

²
Griffin News, 7 October 1886.

from the operation of the present registration law of this county."¹ In addition to fulfilling this revolutionary anti-poll tax, pro-Black stipulation, a candidate was desired who would "accept the local Option law now of force as the law of the land, when the same is so modified and amended that the people of every county of the State shall be placed upon an equal footing and have the same rights with other counties of the State."²

In that same extraordinary interracial meeting a motion was carried that the chairman, Judge Hammond, appoint a committee of two representatives from each country district and five from the town district to determine an order of business (for the meeting) and suggest a nominee to run for the legislature. E. W. Cobb, of Spalding's (Black) Africa district, as said, urged that the committee be composed of Blacks and whites, and moved "that one colored be added from each district." His motion was carried.³

Apparently this remarkable prohibitionist effort in Spalding caught the attention of Democrats across the state even after that county voted down local option. The News quipped after a Democrat was elected in the regular elections months later, " . . . Today there is not a more solid or harmonious county in the state, including the whole people, white

1
Griffin News, 5 September 1886.

2
Ibid.

3
Ibid.

and black."¹ The News noted that " . . . The papers over the State have been commenting upon the disturbed condition of politics in Spalding, even a Pike county paper having the temerity to remark upon it."²

During this same momentous year which temporarily decided the fate of prohibition in neighboring Spalding, a revolutionary occurrence took place at the Spalding polls. A Black suddenly announced his candidacy. According to the excited News report:

There was very little excitement over the election . . . and consequently only a light vote was cast, toward afternoon however news was sent that a negro had sprung himself as a candidate at Orchard Hill and was carrying Akin's district. It was learned that he had had 500 tickets printed early in the morning, and before noonday some of them had got pretty well scattered; though up to two o'clock only one of them had been cast here.

Shadrick Mitchell, the colored candidate was in town after dinner. He is a grizzly haired, sober and honest appearing darkey, 'sixty years ole and allers been free,' and announced that he was running on the platform that there was no use of a man having rights unless he exercised them, and he thought he had a right to run. He said that when Flynt and Cleveland both came down the darkeys could not understand the situation and solicited him to become a candidate. Shad is a good fish, but he became a little stale by the end of the day.³

While this revolutionary development was taking place in nearby Spalding, a portentous pattern was being set in the election at Barnesville. According to the Griffin News description of how the anti-prohibitionist Democrats carried that Pike town:

The excitement has been intense here for several days and reached its culmination today. Early in the morning the

¹
Griffin News, 11 October 1886.

²
Ibid.

³
Griffin News, 7 October 1886.

Murphey and Barret crowd captured the polls and held them until they had polled a large vote, including about ninety colored. A few minutes after eight o'clock the Gardner and Madden forces marched thirty-three ragged colored citizens down and were greeted with triumphant and derisive yells by the exultant Murpheyites when they saw the small number. But it seemed that the red badge men were simply bringing in as many as they could conveniently vote at the time, and when through they repeated the dose, until after the fifth or sixth repetition the blues became more depressed. At eleven o'clock 424 votes had been cast and Gardner and Madden were thought to be ahead.¹

Hence, the dye was cast at Barnesville for the even greater corruption of the Black vote which would occur in the next, Populist decade.

In the 1887 election of Pike's county officers the flames of prohibitionist independency were still unextinguished. An official count of the vote left the prohibitionists "hopeful."² It may be assumed that the prohibitionists lost that election, in this period when Republicans, reacting to fears that Southern Blacks might lose the vote with Cleveland in the White House, began gathering support for national legislation to stop such an occurrence. The Republican "force" bill requiring federal supervision of federal elections in the South passed in the House of Representatives in 1888. And, notably, in 1887 Blacks of the Pike area launched an independent prohibition-related effort, which was apparently statewide in scope. A Black temperance society was founded at Griffin, with Black minister Rev. T. H. Grant as the president for the state. Adjoining Meriwether's Meriwether Vindicator emphasized the society "is claiming to be a temperance and benevolent society and not a labor

¹
Ibid.

²
Griffin News, 6 January 1887.

organization."¹

In January of 1889, however, the bitterly contested movement in Pike county, which had brought Blacks into the political forefront, was defeated.

By the 1890's, Edward Elder helped effect a political settlement in Pike whereby a Dispensary at Barnesville was made responsible for dispensing, under county authority (apparently), liquor for "medicinal and mechanical" purposes only. This settlement would herald a period in Pike, the 1890's, when 'blind tigers' (moonshining) would apparently thrive in Pike--and violence associated with liquor was apparently commonplace. For his role in the prohibition settlement Edward Elder came under fire; but he defended his actions by declaring the settlement involved "no compromise of the great living principle of prohibition."² He furthermore declared, "There is one thing which every citizen of Barnesville wish /sic/ never to witness again: a contest over the question of prohibition."³

Hence, a revolutionary, brief era came to an end. Incredible long rows of barrooms lined streets of Griffin, as a new era dawned. The Griffin News reprinted a Pike Journal report on the 1889 election, which declared

. . . independentism is dead in Pike. If principles of justice were involved, independentism would be tolerable, but where it simply amounts to a scramble for office the

1

Meriwether Vindicator, quoted in Wall, "Blacks of Meriwether," p. 48.

2

Editorial, P. Journal, 28 August 1890.

3

Ibid.

people have no sympathy with it and no doubt it will be many a day before the independent element will recover courage enough to put out candidates. . . .¹

Contrary to the Journal's view and hope, however, Pike county, the South, and the nation were on the eve of an independent third party revolt which would in Pike--and throughout the South--result in bloodshed and corruption and the beginning of the long, downward path to disfranchisement and vicious repression of Southern Blacks.

But despite what would be the failures of the dawning Populist era, there had been a period, the post-Reconstruction 1880's, when a free-style, autonomous Black candidacy, apart from any party backing, had been respected by a Southern Democratic newspaper in the 'black belt' Pike area of middle Georgia. And also, by grace of the Griffin News' liberalness in the 1880's era, the record had been kept of a post-Reconstruction era when Blacks and native whites in this Georgia 'black belt' section joined together in expressions of truly interracial, anti-liquor politics.

¹

P. Journal, quoted in the Griffin News, 10 January 1889.

CHAPTER IV

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE PIKE COUNTY AREA IN THE NEW ERA, THE 1890's

By the dawning of the new 1890's era, the Griffin News, and probably the society to some degree, had changed. For although there was apparently no change in the News' editorship, suddenly that newspaper was filled with wire-dispatch type articles detailing a preponderance of lurid, sensationalist, violent crimes and atrocities occurring throughout the world! By comparison to the news filling the Pike Journal during the new era, it might have seemed that Griffin and Zebulon were not even in the same world in the new era, let alone some ten miles "up the road" from each other. And yet the connections between these two adjoining middle Georgia sections was perhaps greater than ever in this era when it seemed these two newspapers were suddenly on radically different courses. The new era would bring connections other than the traditional connections provided by common cotton belt farming conditions, superior rail connections, and the fact that Griffin, Spalding's developing industrial mill town county seat, was the leading cotton market and merchandising center for the area. Also Griffin, Georgia's eleventh largest town in 1890, was the banking town used by the people of Zebulon (Pike's county seat) -- not banking town Barnesville.¹

The new connections between these neighboring counties, Pike and

¹

Georgia, State Gazetteer and Business Directory (1896), 648.

Spalding (especially Griffin) would be forged through the radical politics and agrarian revolt set to erupt throughout Georgia in the 1890's. As if to herald this era in which Griffin would be the hub of farmer revolt throughout middle Georgia, the United States agricultural experiment station was established at Griffin between 1888 and 1892.¹ And though the station apparently only did research into soil and crop conditions, its location at Griffin was apparently a psychological boost to farmer prestige in the area.

And whereas these notable 'brush fires' set off by the Farmers Alliance revolt in Griffin and the countryside probably received more attention from the Pike area people and would receive more attention in history, another much more potent revolution of society was being signaled, it would seem, through the pages of the Griffin News as the decade of the Nineties dawned. For, the transformation that newspaper suddenly underwent in the course of two or three years was indicative of great changes coming over the modern world. The Griffin News in the 1890's signaled the changes in three spheres especially: crime, race, and religion.

Concerning crime there had apparently been little reported in this typical village newspaper (the News) in the 1880's. Yet with the same editorship as the newspaper had in that decade, it suddenly in the 1890's began running startling bold-type headlines on beheadings in China, guillotine executions in France, Jack the Ripper's savagery in London, cannibal attacks in Africa. And in the period between 1890 and 1896 clearly crime

1

Range, Georgia Agriculture, p. 132.

and violence were the preoccupation and focus of the Griffin News. Some of that newspapers headlines in 1891, for example, included:

Conneautville, Pennsylvania. "CRUEL ROBBERS Thieves frightfully Burn an Old Man's Feet--To Make Him Give Up His Cash."¹

Joshua, /no state given/ "LITTLE CHILDREN Three Innocent Victims of a Grandmother's Crime. Asleep Together in One Huge Coffin."²

Lima, Ohio. "A DRUNKEN BRUTE Beat His Wife's Head Bare With a Scantling And Then Bored Her Body With a Bullet / . . . children pleading with him, he killed her "even while blood of first wound streaming from her head. . . ."³

In the News' preoccupation with crime, that newspaper took a decisively depersonalized approach to criminals and their victims. That approach, it would seem, symbolized the coming of the new depersonalized industrial era, which would replace the interpersonal closeness of cottage industry-styled work places with the vast impersonalness of giant factory combines--and would replace neighborhood general stores by department stores, and frame buildings by skyscrapers. The same mood of impersonalness, which would institute oppressive work conditions for labor in factories of the new era, found expression, it would seem, in this outpouring of criminal news which the News apparently copied from other newspapers.

The peculiar new News diluge of news on crime and atrocities was not only set apart by the scope it took and the depersonalized, sensational expression it was given, but also the News' preoccupation with Black

1
Griffin News, 19 June 1891.

2
Griffin News, 12 July 1891.

3
Griffin News, 6 June 1891.

criminality was central during this darkening 1890's phase of the ongoing lynch era. This sudden change in the newspaper's benign racial stances of the 1880's signaled in the News perhaps a more serious portent of disaster than the daily's sudden preoccupation with crime.

The News' preoccupation with Black crime above all crime did not, however, preclude its many reports of white lynchings, such as the following headline of a longer article:

FOR WIFE MURDER--Will Bates Pulls the Hemp Rope in Shelbyville /Tennessee/--Beat Her to Death With a Fence Rail--Scott Bates, Will's Father, Had a Close Call, and Only the Sheriff's Quick Work Saved Him From Hanging."¹

But overwhelmingly the News, by adding racial invective upon racial invective in the years from 1890 to 1896, built up a preponderant, overwhelming monument to racial hatred and Black oppression in the Pike county area. And it focused particularly on lynchings, race riots and other reprisals against Blacks, as well as on Blacks' 'worthiness' of such reprisals. The following sequence of some titles of major articles on Blacks in that newspaper in 1891 is offered in evidence of this point, as in 1891 twenty-four of some thirty-eight major News articles on Blacks followed this vicious vein:

Glasgow, Mo. "Negro Lynched--He Was Identified by the Lady, but He protested."²

Johns, Ala. "Charles Bagsby, alias Charley Dausby, the Negro Who Killed Officer Wood . . . has Been Shot Here by Deputy Sheriff Sanders and a Possee."³

¹
Griffin News, 29 June 1892.

²
Griffin News, 22 January 1891.

³
Griffin News, 12 April 1891.

Charlotte, N.C. "FIERCE RACE RIOT . . . An Italian Killed--
Attempt to Lynch the Negro Murderer--Five Hundred Shots
Exchanged . . . Further Trouble Not Improbable."¹

Albany Ga. "Riot Among Negroes."²

Louisville, Ky. "A Train Scene. The Burley Actions of a
Drunken Negro."³

London, England. "CHILDREN EATEN By Perishing Cannibals in the
District of Bayong (Westcoast of Africa)."⁴

London, England. "HEATHEN RAGINGS African Warlike Races Killing
Captives by the Hundreds."⁵

Blackshear, Ga. "A NEGRO FIEND Taken from Georgia Jail and Shot
to Death."⁶

Kentucky, "A NEGRO VILLIAN /sic/ Gets a Drink of Water at a Peace-
ful Home--Then Slays the Members of the Household."⁷

Arcadia, La. "SKINNED ALIVE A Negro Fiend Is Tortured to Death
by Enraged People."⁸

Guerdon, Ark. "A RACE RIOT A Momentary Attack by Negroes Looked
For."⁹

¹
Griffin News, 14 April 1891.

²
Griffin News, 20 May 1891.

³
Griffin News, 10 June 1891.

⁴
Griffin News, 18 June 1891.

⁵
Griffin News, 3 July 1891.

⁶
Griffin News, 8 July 1891.

⁷
Griffin News, 29 July 1891.

⁸
Griffin News, 10 September 1891.

⁹
Griffin News, 29 November 1891

Also, as can be seen by two of these titles, the Griffin newspaper was preoccupied with atrocities occurring in Africa in this era of European neocolonial conquest on that continent.

A typical contrast to the News' racial invective approach to Black Crime is the following treatment the Journal gave Black crime in its regular county court reports (mention of whites' crimes is included to illustrate the relative fairness and total dispassion often evidenced by the Journal in regard to Black crime):

State vs. Pat Harris (col.) cruelty to animals--fined \$36.10

State vs. W. W. Calhoun--using profane language in the presence of ladies--fined \$25.00

State vs. Jim Stafford (col.) pointing pistol at another. Fined \$20.00

State vs. George Willis (col.) assault, battery upon W. T. Wright, well-remembered by people of Barnesville--fined \$80.00

State vs. Ike Whatley pointing pistol at another, carrying concealed weapons--Fined \$25.00 Second case fined \$20.00 and costs.

State vs. Ab Manley pointing pistol at another--Fined \$40.00

State vs. Bob Manley, carrying concealed weapons--Fined \$20.00 and costs

State vs. John Nelson (col.) misdemeanor--Fined \$20.00 and costs¹

And not only in its preponderant Black crime news would the News suddenly deviate from its past attitudes and from the contemporary approaches of the Pike County Journal to Black crime, but in its other news on Blacks, a vein of viscous racism cropped up (in the Griffin News) that was not in the Pike County Journal during the 1890's era, and that had not been in the News in the 1880's.

¹
P. Journal, 15 February 1894.

A profound change and departure from the Pike Journal's outlook occurred not only in the News' unnerving 1890's treatment of race and crime, but also, as said, the change and departure occurred in the News' treatment of religion.

The changed focus of the News' 1890's religious coverage would come at a particularly critical time, as the dawning era would witness devastating weather and crop conditions in this middle Georgia section. Upon this apparently temperate weather zone would be unleashed in the 1890's sub-zero temperatures, snow, blizzards. An earthquake would shake the area, and suddenly in the night and unexpectedly, cyclones! would on three different occasions rip the area apart, twisting trees out of the ground, lifting buildings off the ground and smashing them, and leaving a trail of death, maiming, and homelessness. And in this time of severe trial in Pike, worldwide economic depression would deepen and especially in Georgia's cotton belt, where Pike was located, conditions would deteriorate as cotton reached its lowest price in a third of a century, and crop failures were rife. In these pitiable conditions many people of the Pike area would turn to religion and the church. Revival swept through the area. In 1891, for example, a Pike Journal correspondent wrote of the revival in adjoining Griffin: "Our people of all classes--old and young, white and black--have been so entirely taken up by the wave of religious feeling that has swept over our town that there is little of a social nature to report."¹ The enthusiastic writer further reported:

1

P. Journal, 1 October 1891

The meeting continues with increased interest, with no present prospects of closing. The young ladies hold a daily prayer meeting at the homes of different members every afternoon . . . while . . . the regular meeting is held at the church.

These meetings are well attended while at night the church, by far the largest in the city, is filled to the utmost capacity. After the sermon those deeply interested in the salvation of their souls as many as the basement will hold usually attend these meetings.

Thirty-four or five have united with the church up to date and many more are expected.¹

But whereas the Pike Journal overflowed with sermons and news of local churches during the critical 1890's period, the Griffin News kept up its 1880's coverage of local religious news to some degree--but its focus shifted to a new type of religious reportage, namely 'Higher Criticism' attacks on the Bible. More than one article confronting Bible teachings appeared in the News in the 1890's, as the newspaper chronicled the ongoing scientific-humanist movement in America to unseat Biblical authority in religion. The shift from the newspaper's solidly pro-Bible 1880's religious articles was significant. (The shift was of course due in part to the great use the News made in the 1890's of teletype releases from other newspaper sources.) And in that respect the News was chronicling to the people of this middle Georgia section a profound change in thought and belief which was occurring especially in the Northern cities of America.

News headlines furthermore illustrate that the change in the newspaper's religious views was fueled by a stronger impulse than just the omission of sermon formats (used by the News in the 1880's). One 1893 headline declared, "To the Unknown God--The Tendency of Modern Religious Liberalism;" another asked in 1894: "Did Cain Kill Abel?--More of the Higher Criticisms of the Bible--

¹ Ibid.

Professor Harper of Chicago."¹ Although in some cases such News headlines seemed to be just sensationalist "teasers" for articles arguing in support of the Bible, the anti-Bible arguments are nonetheless inadvertently or intentionally implied in the same articles. In the article "To The Unknown God," for example, a report on the Parliament of Religions' actions at Chicago brought the News revealed comment from Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix of New York that "Paul would never have dreamt of granting another religion a share in this power of salvation."² Also one News article containing the headline "Theological tempest--disputes between theologians" began by declaring "Some church assemblies are testing their collective wisdom just now in deciding how the Bible shall be interpreted and how much authority it shall have when interpreted."³

The Pike Journal, on the other hand, confined its vein of scholarly essays on religion to practical Bible teachings, concluding in one series of essays by Zeke Johnson,

If I could get close to the elbows of editors of religious papers I would shove their pens through the paper whenever they start to write learned and lengthy editorials on infidelity, 'New Theology' and 'Higher Criticism.' Why, not one in ten would ever hear of or be troubled by these things were it not for their advertising them.⁴

1

Griffin News, 19 November 1893; 2 February 1894.

2

Griffin News, 19 November 1893.

3

Griffin News, 5 June 1891.

4

P. Journal, 4 February 1892.

The Journal's religious essays furthermore avoided esoteric or superficial approaches to religion. In Zeke Johnson's series of "Letters to Preachers" and his "Letters to Church Members," for example, he advised preachers in these hard times,

Christianity makes a man feel good. Gout is sometimes mistaken for religion and dyspepsia for spirituality of mind. Do not murmur about prosperity and inconvenience when your people sleep on straw beds, get poor wages and live in clap-board shantees or log huts. Suffer with your people if need be.¹

On the other hand, these lengthy Journal religious essays by Johnson evidenced much scholarly learning in their pragmatic advices, as he admonished preachers,

Declamation fills the ear, style pleases the eye, but earnestness--a soul on fire with interest--reaches the earth. To be thoroughly in earnest is to be thoroughly eloquent. I have been told by a preacher that the way to know what you are going to talk about is to study, and the way to be in earnest is to pray. It is said that John Knox's wife overheard him praying at midnight, and he was crying in indescribable earnestness, 'God give me Scotland.' It is said too, that Wesley was known to pray before sunrise until he was quite wet with perspiration.²

Zeke Johnson was also very direct about the needs of the day, and noted "Georgia has about 2500 white preachers, or eighteen to the county, and yet there is much mission ground in the State."³ But unfortunately

1

P. Journal, 22 January 1892.

2

P. Journal, 29 January 1892.

3

P. Journal, 22 January 1892.

he saw no special mission ground in the plight of Blacks in neocolonial Africa or post-slave Georgia. Johnson noted, for example,

I recently saw a statement that the expense of conducting missionary operations in certain of the South Sea Islands had been \$3,000,000 in fifty years, while America's trade with the same people for the same period had been \$50,000,000. Now suppose all the agencies for good direct and indirect were renumerated; that all that Christianity has done and is now doing for mankind could be instantly blotted out and the human family placed just where they would be, but for Christianity, and what would be the condition of the world? Africa and China are partial answers to the question, though not complete, for all nation, more or less, have been influenced by Christian civilization.¹

And Johnson furthermore, in his only other reference to Black people in this long series, derided the Black ministry to illustrate a point-- though he had concluded, 'To be useful an illustration must be short and simple, like the Savior's--the sower, the builder, the wedding garment, the pearl, the rich man, the prodigal.'² But one of Johnson's own illustrations in a list of advices on sermon techniques for preachers noted,

Secondly, be a preacher. A negro preacher said, 'I drump I see two big letters on de fence, dey was G. P., and I say to mesef dat means 'go preach,' so I go sah.' 'Jes 'bout like you fool nigger; dem big letters, G. P., mean 'go plow, dey do sah,' replied his companion. . . .³

Also among the Journal's otherwise high-level, unsensational, serious-minded religious news coverage during the era are found two of

¹
P. Journal, 26 February 1892.

²
P. Journal, 4 February 1892.

³
P. Journal, 22 January 1892.

the few examples of 'nigger jokes' appearing in the Pike newspaper during the era. In one case, the Journal recounted the story of a "colored man of devout intentions who looks into the Bible for a name for his newborn child and chooses Beezlebub." According to the Journal, the man said, "the chill'll sho'ly do credit to hits namesake, suh."¹ In the other case, the Journal's Rev. Lee, who printed very little on Black preachers among his profuse news on Blacks, printed under the title "An African-Sermon," this piece which he claimed Captain A. S. Allen "had the pleasure of listening to a few Sundays ago at an African Methodist Church in North Pike":

Brudders and Sisters: I takes my tex in de 99th chapter of de Macabees. De verse me forgits, but de words be dese: 'In John Cox's cornfield dar bees in berry long transe. I went to heben and hell both. Dat hell, brudders, is one mighty bad place. I seed one man goin' bout wid dout any head on. W'at you compar him to, brudders? I compar him to a hoss drain' dout any colar on. It' a powerful hot place, too; I seed grease 'nough fry out of one man to fry fritters a fortnight--yes two week. Whatever you does, brudders and sisters, try fur to shun dat hell.²

Lee's, Johnson's, and Captain Allen's attacks on Black religious aspirations and the Black ministry may have been funny to the people of Pike, but they were hardly fitting stereotypes for the Pike area, where in 1888, Rev. W. S. Ramsey, a Black visiting minister to the area's Cabin Creek Colored Baptist Association "preached two very fine sermons in the white Baptist Church" at Greenville (in adjoining Meriwether), and "Some

1

P. Journal, 4 February 1892.

2

P. Journal, 15 January 1892.

of the leading citizens of the town were out to hear him. . . ."¹

Also the report on Black preachers and Black churches, in county historian Rev. R. W. Rogers' History of Pike County from 1822 to 1922 dispelled that type of stereotypy of Pike Blacks. According to that report, until the close of the war, Blacks in Pike county belonged to the same churches as whites and were served by the same pastors. In that epoque Blacks held their services in the afternoons. Also there were galleries in many of the Methodist churches, where numbers of servants sat during the services for white people. Also Rogers' report made the extraordinary assertion that in the antebellum period in Pike, "Some negroes were licensed as local preachers, and did much good among their own people, some of whom the writer remembers well, viz., Sandy Kendall and Edmund Lowe of Upson County, and Wm. Fincher of Pike County."²

Rogers also noted that soon after the war, "the M. E. Church, South /sic/, organized the colored M. E. Church and has fostered it ever since. The other colored Methodists have gone either to the M. E. Church (North) or to the African M. E. Church."³

In addition to the recently organized Black church denominational affiliates, another vein of truly fundamentalist Bible belief held sway in Pike during the 1890's period of Rev. Lee's and Zeke Johnson's emphasis on school-trained preachers. One evidence of that current in the Pike

1

Meriwether Vindicator, quoted in Wall, "Blacks of Meriwether," p. 43.

2

R. W. Rogers, History of Pike County From 1822 to 1922 (Zebulon, Georgia, 1922), pp. 61-2.

3

³Ibid., p. 62.

area was evidenced in the following "Articles of Faith"¹ of the Primitive² Western Baptist Association, which in 1895 held its conference at County Line in Pike:

"Articles of Faith"

- 1st We believe in one only true and living God, and that there are three persons in the Godhead, viz. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
- 2nd We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and the only rule of faith and practice
- 3rd We believe in the doctrine of eternal and particular election
- 4th We believe in the doctrine of original sin
- 5th We believe in the doctrine of man's impotency to recover himself from the fallen state he is in by nature, of his own free will and ability
- 6th We believe that sinners are justified in the sight of God only by the imputed righteousness of Christ
- 7th We believe that God's elect shall be called, converted and sanctified by the Holy Spirit
- 8th We believe that Saints shall persevere in grace, and shall never finally fall away
- 9th We believe that Baptism, the Lord's Supper and washing the Saints' feet are ordinances of Jesus Christ, and that true believers are the only subjects of these ordinances, and that the true mode of baptism is by immersion
- 10th We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and general judgement.

1

Primitive Western Association After Reorganization. Minutes of 8th Session of Primitive Western Association After Reorganization (County Line, Pike County, 1895).

²It should be noted that the word "primitive" was popularly used in the South in the 1880's and 1890's periods to denote "pure." See, for example, an article on a Monroe County Farmer's Alliance lodge in the People's Party Paper of March 24, 1892.

11th We believe that the punishment of the wicked will be everlasting and the joys of the righteous will be eternal

12th We believe that no minister has a right to the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, only such as are regularly called, and come under the imposition of hands by a regularly authorized presbytery.

Another evidence of that fundamentalist current in the Pike area was found in the following articles (excerpted), which appeared without any further commentary in the Griffin News:

Power of Healing . . .
(Albuquerque, New Mexico)

Looking like an animated picture of Christ, credited with performing acts on a par with the miracles of the Son of God, Francis Schlader, who claims to have been until two years ago a shoemaker in Denver, has set wild the Mexicans of the territory just to the South of this city . . .

He is followed about by hundreds of Mexicans and Indians who pray of him that he touch their wounds and cure them of ailments. Representatives of the best Mexican families are imploring him to . . . go with them to their homes to cure the afflicted. The man goes, as he says, whither his master directs, and for the services he performs he will have nothing.

At Peralta, Jesus Ma Volasquez, who is said to have been totally blind for three years, see since he touched this man's hands.

Juliana Sodillo, who has not moved her arms for years, is now working in the fields. Scores of similar stories are told.

At Sodillo, where Schlader stayed during eight days, a watch was put on him day and night, and it is asserted that he ate no food and drank but a few swallows of water.¹

The Priest Healer . . .
(Pittsburgh)

The little church of the Most Holy Name on Mount Troy continues to be the centre of attraction for hundreds of afflicted humanity. About 500 invalids applied to father Mollinger for his blessing in the morning, and all were accommodated. Martin Lavin, of Somerset, Niagara county, N. Y., a 15-year-old boy who had never walked since childhood, was carried into the presence of Father Mollinger. After anointing and blessing the boy the priest commanded him to walk, which to his great

¹ Griffin News, 18 July 1895.

delight, he did . . . Father Mollinger asks no charges for his services in blessing the afflicted. The voluntary contributions, however, that are left in the basket . . . are enormous. . . .¹

Besides the 1890's focus in the Pike area on religion, crime and disparate racial views, another significant focus during the period was public education. Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods saw the beginnings of public education in Georgia. In 1870 a Georgia law entitled "An Act to Establish a System of Public Education" provided for a general school fund; for separate schools for white and Black children; for migratory schools to offset the problem of sparseness of population; for a state school commissioner, county commissioners, county subdistricts with school trustees, boards of examiners to license teachers, and state and county boards of education.² By 1880, 81.6 percent of Blacks in Georgia ten or more years of age were illiterate and 23.2 percent of whites in this age group were illiterate. By 1890 the figure for illiteracy among the state's Blacks ten years and above was down to 67.3 percent; and white illiteracy among the same age group was at 16.5 percent.³

According to Dorothy Orr's authoritative History of Education in Georgia, "From the first to the last, the difficulty of the work in

1

Griffin News, 18 June 1891.

2

Dorothy Orr, A History of Education in Georgia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 196.

3

U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Population, I, xxvi; Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Population, II, cxv.

developing the school system was increased by the large proportion of Negroes as well as the lack of money." During the post-Reconstruction period, the "Negro Question" was "an all-absorbing" issue as there was widespread hostility on the part of Georgia whites towards any public school system which taxed whites to pay for Blacks' education.¹ The bitter impression through the state was that whites, who paid the greater portion of all taxes collected in Georgia, were carrying a great taxation burden for the education of Blacks.

To counter this mistaken view fostered by public men and the press, however, Dr. Gustavus Orr, a rather liberal State School Commissioner who shaped much of the early public school policy in Georgia, prepared a daring circular providing statistics which showed that Blacks had actually paid \$125,127.70 of the \$151,428.26 paid to Black public school teachers in 1882 (because of the manner in which legislators had allocated the sources of school revenues).² On the other hand, as almost all of what Blacks paid for the expenses of state government went into the school fund, all other taxation burdens indeed fell upon whites. But also, where pay was concerned, the state's Black teachers were discriminated against from this period until well into the Civil Rights era of the 1960's.³

The pay of Georgia's rural teachers was especially pathetic during

¹
Orr, Education in Georgia, p. 237.

²
Orr, Education in Georgia, 240.

³
Ibid., pp. 240-41.

the period under study. The average salary of the state's rural teachers in 1894, for example, was twenty-eight to thirty dollars per month for five months. "And there was no work or money for seven months."¹ And teachers who worked in spring or summer, when weather made the terrible condition of most rural schoolhouses more tolerable, did not receive their pay until the collection of taxes in the fall. Hence, these teachers had to borrow at high interest rates from loan agents in order to survive.²

Pay discrimination against Black teachers, a common practice throughout the United States during the post-Reconstruction and other periods, was accomplished through two common practices--namely, through distinctions made by boards as to the qualifications of Black and white teachers, and through hiring practices which accorded Black teachers whatever pay they would accept. Also by this latter procedure white women were generally paid much less than white men teachers having the same qualifications. But, according to Orr, Black teachers throughout the state in the 1880's and many years thereafter were nevertheless "receiving more for their services as teachers than they could earn in any other employment."³ The dismal truth in this statement is supported by the fact, for example, that in 1891 Southern farmers were paying 40 cents to cottonpickers for one-third of a bale, and two dollars was paid for

1

Ibid., p. 252.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid., pp. 240-41.

having an acre of land hoed three times over.¹

Also during the 1890's period the average pay of city school teachers in systems supported by local taxes greatly exceeded the average pay of rural teachers in systems, like Pike county's, which were totally dependent on the common school fund and were not supplemented by local taxes. According to the State School Commissioner's report in 1895, for example,

. . . the pay of the teacher in the city school in Georgia, supported by local tax, was \$452.00 per annum. The average pay of the teacher in the county school without local tax was less than \$120.00 per annum. The teacher in the city school has nine or ten months' employment, and can give his whole time, and his whole thought to his work. The teacher in the country school has from three to five months' employment, and is compelled to seek other fields of employment for at least seven months in the year. The inevitable result of this has been to tend to drive out of the country the teachers who have professional ability . . . so that for the last twenty years our best country teachers have either left the profession altogether and gone into some other callings of life, or they have drifted into the city system. . . .²

During the 1890's severe depression most of Georgia's rural schoolhouses were in a deplorable condition. The average value of the country schoolhouse under the common school system, as reported to the Office of the State School Commissioner in 1895, was \$108.00.--This paltry sum is all the more alarming in view of the fact that in the same year the average value of schoolhouses under the system supported by local tax was \$8,554.00.³

1
Southern Cultivator, June 1891.

2
Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner of Georgia to the General Assembly for 1895 (1896), 10-11.

3
Ibid., 26.

The devastating condition of rural school houses prompted summer and spring school sessions, but large numbers of rural children were not able to attend these sessions because they had to help lay down the crops during those sessions. In 1895, for example, in a common school population of 600,000 some 250,000 Georgia children did not attend school at all, and a large majority of these 250,000 children were of the rural districts.¹ During the Nineties, when the poverty-stricken, dispirited farmers stopped contributing local supplements to the state fund, a State Commissioner's report declared, "The people have simply quit paying tuition, and the children are left to grow up in ignorance. . . ."2

Also, according to Orr, the private school fund had supplemented the public fund from the beginning, and private teachers had taken in public school students in the public term of schools. But in a period of thirty years after the establishment of the state's public school system, private schools had largely disappeared in Georgia. "By 1894 the academy, or secondary school, practically had been blotted from the map." And in rural sections "public school teachers were the sole dependence."³

In Pike county, however, whites had emphasized education for their boys and girls from the county's earliest days, and by the 1890's private high schools for whites still survived there. The following chart depicts this fact as well as gives a general overview on school enrollment in

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

Orr, Education in Georgia, p. 250.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN THE PIKE AREA 1890

COUNTIES	School-aged Citizens from 5 to 10 years Inclusive						Number of Scholars Admitted in the Public Schools in 1890						
	Native White		Foreign White		Total Colored		White		Colored		Totals		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	W	Col	White & Col.
Meriwether	1915	2035	1	--	2700	2634	962	979	314	387	1941	701	2642
Monroe	1250	1300	--	--	2944	2827	761	718	1104	1286	1479	2390	3869
PIKE	1724	1680	2	1	1905	1803	1118	1014	769	823	2132	1592	3724
Spalding	1136	1220	2	--	1560	1701	451	378	556	574	829	1130	1959
Upton	1244	1220 /sic/	1	--	1428	1295	693	591	518	550	1284	1068	2352

SOURCES: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States: Population, pt. 1: 758-9, 895; Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner of Georgia to the General Assembly Submitted November 1890 and Covering the Educational Operations of 1889 and 1890 (1890).

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN THE PIKE AREA 1890 - Continued

Number of Scholars Admitted in Private Schools																											
Private Elementary Schools								Private High Schools																			
W				Col.		Totals		W				Col.		Totals													
M		F		M		F		W		Col.		W & Col.		M		F		M		F		W		Col.		W & Col.	
Meriwether	515	539	96	121	1054	217	1271	190	181	--	--	371	--	371													
Monroe	329	404	108	147	733	255	988	85	55	53	62	140	115	255													
PIKE	347	306	149	153	653	302	955	436	425	--	--	861	--	861													
Spalding	212	218	98	102	430	200	630																				
Upson	446	361	--	--	807	--	807																				

Pike and adjoining counties in 1890. Notably Pike had the highest number of white children admitted to the public schools in 1890 and Monroe had the highest number of Blacks admitted to public schools in the area. Also it should be noted that Meriwether had an unusually high number of white children in private elementary schools, whereas Pike had the highest number of Black children (302) in private elementary schools. And whereas only in Monroe did Blacks have secondary education exposure, Pike had an unusually large number of whites in private high schools.

Although no specific information was found concerning Pike's private Black school(s) in the 1890's, it is known that a certain class of whites in Pike put great emphasis on local white private schools during the era. Jefferson Davis secondary institute at Zebulon was "one of the hobbies of the town" in the 1890's.¹ In 1891 Barnesville's celebrated white co-educational secondary academy took on its military department (along with two cannon provided by Governor Northen); and it added in that year a music department and a class in telegraphy.²

Apparently during the 1890's, as had been the case in the 1880's, Gordon students' private school education was highly subsidized by Barnesville municipal revenues. The Pike Journal reported in 1890 that in a year's time \$10,000 was allocated by the city for the all-white private school.³

¹
P. Journal,

²
Fish and Lambdin, Lamar County, 133-34.

³
P. Journal, 24 April 1890.

It is not clear to what degree Zebulon town government supported the town's white Jeff Davis institute, where tuition in the 1890's corresponded to Gordon institute's tuition in the 1880's (i.e. the 1891 spring term at Jeff Davis cost \$7.00, with music and art classes being separately priced at \$3.00 each).¹ But what was clear was a rising, bitter anti-public school sentiment during the 1890's. And whereas Griffin's public schools were subsidized by local taxes during the period, a fierce editorial campaign would be led in the Pike Journal to defeat local support of public schools in Pike in the 1890's. This bitter opposition to using local taxes for public school children was especially mean in view of the tax support given white private education, and in view of the fact that the opposition would come shortly after a revolutionary 1890's effort of some Black Pike teachers to procure what little pay had been promised them.

And whereas it would appear that the Pike Black teachers' action was revolutionary for the 1890's, it should be noted that a significant precedent had been forged in the earlier 1880's decade for revolutionary Black political actions to center on the public schools. For not only had Tom Watson's 1882 campaign in McDuffie county forced him and his opponent in that race for a Georgia legislature seat to defend their positions on Black education in order to get the Black vote, but also in April 1882 more than three hundred Blacks had met in a revolutionary protest at Macon called the "Jeff Long Convention."² Led by B. H. Long and W. A.

¹
P. Journal, 8 January 1891.

²
Orr, Education in Georgia, pp. 238-39.

Pledger, the Black Atlanta lawyer who would be a prominent figure in the 1890's Populist revolt era, that meeting at Macon had adopted the radical, revolutionary platform of supporting any movement which sought to overthrow the Bourbon Democracy. But apparently a significant outcome and focus of this radical Black protest was a Black convention in Atlanta in 1883 to discuss "Educational Advantages for Colored People."¹

Concerning the day-to-day workings of the rural common school--Georgia's less than perfect educational mainstay--the Report of the State School Commissioner for 1896 in its "Report of the Sub-Committee on Instruction and Discipline" thus further described the rural classrooms throughout the nation:

About one-half of all the teachers in the United States teach in what are called ungraded schools. They receive in one room pupils of all ages and all degrees of advancement, from ABC's upward, sometimes even to Algebra and Latin. In extreme cases each pupil is a class by himself in all branches, except perhaps reading, writing, and spelling
²

The well-known "Blue Back" Speller, one source noted, was the whole library of Pike's Gordon Institute in the 1880's.³ Also, the Pike County Journal repeatedly referred to efforts during the 1890's to provide Jeff Davis Institute, among local schools, with badly needed library books. In this regard it should be noted that during the 1890's schoolbooks sold at unreasonable prices. According to Orr, "The crossroads merchant

¹
 Ibid.

²Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner of Georgia to the General Assembly for 1896 (1897), 380.

³
 Fish and Lambdin, Lamar County, p. 180

often made a 50 percent profit as well as the 20 percent required by the publisher."¹ It will be seen that the waning Populist party's efforts to survive Democratic absorption of its reform measures after 1894 involved pushing 'controversial' legislation to provide Georgia's public school children with textbooks. Though the Populist effort aroused questions among Pike Democrats, it was clearly a badly needed measure--as indicated by the following State School Commissioner's appraisal of conditions in the one-room schoolhouse in 1896:

. . . It quite often happens that there is no uniformity of textbooks, each pupil having a different edition or different author; the teacher is often obliged to borrow the pupil's book when he hears him recite. . . .²

During the era, daily recitations were the main instructional method in Georgia's schools, as well as throughout the nation. Lamenting the rural teachers' limitations--thought to be alleviated in the graded system of the cities--the State School Commissioner's 1896 report thus described the daily recitation in great detail:

The /rural/ teacher, even after forming classes in writing, reading, and spelling, has twelve to fifteen lessons to hear in a forenoon and nearly as many more for the afternoon. There is an average of less than ten minutes for each recitation. The ideal of the recitation or class exercise is that the teacher probe to the bottom of the pupil's preparation of his lesson, and correct bad habits of study. If the pupil fails to master by sufficient industry the details--the facts and external items--the teacher counsels and reproves, requiring more work on the same lesson. If he finds that the details are mastered the teacher next tests the combinations, the thoughts that the pupil has used in connecting one fact with another in seeing relations . . . So a

¹
Orr, Education in Georgia, p. 251.

²
Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner for 1896, 380.

lesson is learned properly when the pupil can place each item in its systematic relation to the whole. . . .¹

The same expose explained concerning the daily recitation that " . . . the good teacher is not satisfied with a memoriter recitation of the details of the lesson--still less with the word-for-word rendition of the text-book . . . to bring out the thought which unites these details and explains them, is the main object. . . ."2--Most rural schools were indicted in their use of this pedagogical method, as

. . . In the necessarily brief recitation of the ungraded school there is barely time to test the pupil, mastery of the external details of the lesson, the sure facts and technical words. It is for this reason more especially that the rural school has been the parent of poor methods of instruction--of parrot memorizing and of learning words instead of things³

The same report further indicted the rural school for two other shortcomings: for not being able, with its five-to-ten-minute recitations, to do much in the way of reviewing previous lessons; and for " . . . the old evil of the rural school, that of having all pupils begin at the beginning of the book at the commencement of each annual term. . . ."4 (irregardless of the point in the text which the pupil had reached in the previous term). In also pointing to the danger of the graded city system in ruining certain youths' school days and in undermining their

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Ibid.

4
Ibid.

self-respect, the same report advocated the graded system for rural schools but admonished that

. . . The greatest danger of the graded school system in cities comes from holding back bright pupils for the sake of the slower and duller pupils . . . The best pupils are engaged in 'marking time', while the slowest are constantly spurred forward by teachers and parents to keep up with their class, and their school years rendered miserable. Their self-respect is undermined by a false standard, that of mere speed in learning. . . .¹

And pointing to then current efforts of the State to obtain better teachers for its rural schools by means of pay incentives the 1896 report further admonished

. . . with the new movement to secure better teachers for rural schools by larger appropriations from the State, it has happened that many experiments of classification are attempted which result disastrously . . . by demoralizing or destroying the courage and ambition of the exceptionally bright and exceptionally dull pupils. . . .²

In addition to all these exigencies, the public school teachers were also required to attend unrecompensed teacher training institutes during the 1890's period. In the period the "main reliance for the instruction of teachers" continued to be Peabody Institutes begun in 1888, although teacher attendance at these white and correspondent Black institutes was sometimes sparse because they preceded the season when the teachers received their pay.³ Also teachers' applications for Peabody scholarships vastly outnumbered the few scholarships which were available.

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

Orr, Education in Georgia, p. 252.

CHAPTER V

THE RISE OF THE FARMER'S ALLIANCE IN GEORGIA AND THE PIKE COUNTY AREA

One ominous force shaping the severely deprived condition of public education in rural Georgia was, as said, the severe economic depression of the 1890's. In the South, however, the unyielding, all but suicidal commitment of farmers to the dethroned 'king' staple—cotton—had, as seen, helped foster a continuing cycle of depression on Georgia farms throughout most of the post-Reconstruction period. But in the 1890's the continuously plunging price of cotton even fell below the cost of production. Also, as seen, the devastating conditions by which Georgia farmers were bound over to the Bourbon merchant class and the railroad barons in the post-war period described an ongoing drama of deprivation and suffering on Georgia farms.

By the late 1880's farmers in Georgia and the South and West had channeled their dissent over conditions into a movement resembling the farmer self-help programs spawned by the earlier Granger movement. The Amalgamation of Farmers' Union and Alliance had by 1887 chapters in all Southern states except Alabama. Between 1887 and 1889 most of Cotton states suddenly got farmers' exchanges--where profits were shared and middle men were cut short. Georgia's exchange was one of the strongest. Organized in Atlanta in 1889, the exchange in the same year was said to have saved patron members over \$200,000 on fertilizers.¹

¹ Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 79.

Farmers' warehouses, gins, and cooperative stores appeared all over the South, particularly in Georgia. Because these cooperative ventures often forced local merchants' prices down, the merchants' and middlemen's interests vindictively fought the farmers' efforts. They brought to bear against the co-ops "Innuendo, ridicule, direct charges of dishonesty, dire prophecies of bankruptcy, scandal, price and rate discriminations on the part of wholesalers, manufacturers, railroads, money lenders . . . "1

Though in 1890 efforts were made to disrupt and discredit the Georgia exchange, the exchange survived until 1893. But many of the farmers' enterprises went under a short while after their incorporation, as in addition to the cut-throat competition, the farmers faced the serious handicap of insufficient capital and credit backing. And they took on more business than their limited credit warranted and reduced profit margins too far.²

The Southern Alliance was a ritualistic, secret order with an elaborate system of government (i.e. a supreme council and executive council)--whereas the counterpart Northwest order lacked ritualistic appeal. The Bible was often invoked at Alliance meetings, which typically used lecturers and round table discussions to help the heretofore unknowlegeable farmers plan strategies of survival. Along with the "honest-to-goodness" dirt farmers, the membership of Alliance included a great many clergymen, mechanics, agricultural editors, teachers, and doctors; excluded were: "merchants, merchants clerks, or any one who owns an interest in a dry goods, hardware; furniture, drugstore, or any mercantile business, unless

1

Ibid., p. 80.

2

Ibid., pp. 80-1; Range, Georgia Agriculture, p. 142.

said member is selected to take charge of a co-operative Farmers' and Laborers' Union store. . . ."¹ Also excluded from membership were "lawyers who have a license to practice law in a county, district, or supreme court, and any person owning stock in any state, national, or other banking association."²

The Southern Alliance, unlike its offspring and heir-apparent the Populist party, decided in 1888 to bar interracial membership. Two years before the decree on race, R. M. Humphrey, a white clergyman and former missionary at Houston County, Texas organized the secret, separate Colored Farmers' Alliance. Difficult to organize because of Blacks' economic plight and local opposition, the Colored Alliance, nevertheless, by the end of 1890 claimed about 1,200,000 members, 700,000 of which were male and 84,000 of which lived in Georgia.³

In an era which had brought so many challenges and reprisals to Blacks; some Blacks saw the Alliance as a type of second emancipation.⁴ It was much more to a spokesman writing incredible news of the South Carolina Colored Alliance. That correspondent declared in the National Alliance, the Black Alliance organ:

. . . I know that I don't overstate the facts when I declare that the Alliance has been more to these people than a grand second emancipation. Of course much remains yet to be

¹
Saloutos, Farmer Movements, p. 77.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid., p. 84.

⁴
National Alliance, quoted in P. Journal, 5 June 1890.

done. We must stick together; we must pay our dues. We have now in this State nearly one thousand organized Alliances and still the cause rolls forward. . . .¹

Undoubtedly the Pike County Journal took great note of the hope expressed in this Black's report. For, in an era of many natural disasters, dire economic suffering, great social upheavals, and rampant violence, this Black South Carolinian exhorted such discipline on the part of Blacks, for (he said), "I am satisfied that the Alliance is the harbinger of Christ's grand coming."²

The typically insecure, mistrustful, debt-ridden, small white "yeoman" farmer . membership of the Southern Alliance opposed education for Blacks in any form.³ But, according to the official Southern Alliance organ, the National Economist, Black/white cooperation was seen as a necessity if farmers were to successfully raise prices for their goods and lower their expenses.⁴ According to that newspaper, "The fact is that the law of self-preservation compels the southern white farmer to . . . hold /the Negro/ out of the clutches of the exploiter."⁵

By 1890 there were Black Alliance business enterprises in over 20 states. White alliancemen reflected "the greatest good will and hearty

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Bacote, "Negro Life in Georgia," 209; Saloutos, Farmer Movement, p. 4.

4
National Economist, 7 June 1890.

5
National Economist, 4 July 1891.

cooperation" towards the Black farmer exchanges doing business in at least six cities.¹ The Texas colored Alliance was particularly prominent and in 1890 claimed assets of \$135,000.²

The advent of an organized, determined, statewide farmers' self-help organization which sought to educate the farmers as to the causes and solutions of their problems had a profound effect on the heretofore down-trodden class. Because of its efforts and the desperate aspirations it represented, the Alliance took on a flavor of a substitute religion. One United States senator made the accusation that "The Alliance is in great measure taking the place of churches." He claimed that Western Alliance meetings were "conducted on the same principle as oldtime religious revival meetings."³

Tom Watson declared of the Alliance:

It is sacred to us because it gives hope to our despair; gives expression to our troubles; gives voice to our wants. Our wives have knelt and prayed for it. Our children have learned to love it. Not a church in all the land, where God's blessing has not been invoked upon it!⁴

It will be seen that the Alliance's cause of self betterment and Bible help--with its racist tendencies--caught like a flame in the Pike county area. No sources were found, however, to indicate what might have

1

Saloutos, Farmer Movements, pp. 95-6.

2

Ibid., p. 96.

3

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 118.

4

Ibid.

been Blacks' connection to the Alliance fire which spread through the Pike area in the late 1880's.

In any case, it should be noted that in its May 1888 issue the Southern Cultivator and Dixie Farmer, "a conservative agricultural paper" of the era, reported that "The Pike County Georgia farmers recently organized a county Alliance at Zebulon and were addressed by President Jackson of the state Alliance."¹ As the following limited sample of counties' news correspondence indicates, Pike's Alliance was in the hub of what was probably excited Alliance activity throughout all the counties adjoining Pike.

The news from the Thomaston Times at the nearby Upson county seat in June 1888 was that county had eight Alliances already, which were about to have a grand mass meeting. Also, Hon. A. J. Williams had been appointed to continue the organization of new Alliances all over the county.² And by June of that year the Thomaston Times was noting that the directors of the local Alliance store "have decided to establish a fruit canning factory at that place, and that work will be commenced at once."³

About the same time that Pike's Alliance was getting started, nearby Monroe reported its county Alliance to be in "a flourishing condition". By October of '88 the Monroe Alliance had opened a warehouse at Culloden, on the Atlanta and Florida Railroad. In Monroe the Grange also persisted.⁴

¹ Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 101; Southern Cultivator, May 1888, p. 226.

² Southern Cultivator, June 1888.

³ P. Journal, 5 June 1890.

⁴ Southern Cultivator, July 1888, p. 310; August 1888, p. 372; October 1888, p. 468.

During the era of firey farmer revolt, Griffin, Spalding County's industrial 'boom' city and the site of the new U. S. agricultural experiment station, apparently became a veritable Alliance center in middle Georgia. A Farmer's Alliance mass meeting was called at Griffin in the fall of 1888, about five months after the organization of Pike's Alliance. Every Allianceman in Pike, Meriwether, Coweta, Fayette, Clayton, Henry, Butts, Monroe, and Spalding counties was invited to hear addresses by state Alliance Vice President L. F. Livingston and state Alliance lecturer Rev. J. W. Beck in a morning session open to all farmers, including non-Alliance members, and in an evening session which was "a strictly private Alliance affair."¹

One evidence of the "war on all monopolies, trusts and combines" declared by the Spalding Alliance² was the Farmer's Alliance warehouse established at Griffin. Many Pike county farmers were among the patrons of the warehouse, which in 1889 reported receipt of 7,891 bales of cotton and payment of \$2,032.20 on 5,803½ bales as dividends to 598 persons.³ By June of the following year the farmers' warehouse at Griffin reported receipt of nearly 2,000 bales of cotton; with \$4,500 in the bank, a dividend of forty-five cents per bale was declared--all of which, boasted its proprietors, "goes to the members of the Alliance."⁴ A farmers'

¹ Southern Cultivator, October 1888, p. 468.

² Southern Cultivator, March 1889, p. 142.

³ Southern Cultivator, June 1889, p. 284.

⁴ P. Journal, 5 June 1890.

manufactory in Griffin furthermore listed \$17,000 in dividends in 1890.¹

Griffin also had an Alliance newspaper, the Griffin Alliance Journal, which in 1889 announced that the "true mission of the Alliance"

. . . is to build up the farmer, morally, socially, intellectually and pecuniarily /sic/. The lodge inculcates obedience to the Bible, on which the order is founded. It brings neighbors together and makes all friends. By papers, literature and lectures it improves the minds of the membership. Last but not leastly, it helps the farmers to make money by buying at cheapest prices and selling in best markets.²

With the fires of agrarianism burning throughout the countryside, the Pike County Alliance in 1889 adopted what was a progressive policy in Georgia farming. This Alliance, according to the Southern Cultivator, pledged itself to plant "a full supply of provision crops, and to make an earnest effort to raise their own meat and other farm products for home consumption--to live at home and board in the same place."³

In 1889 the Southern Alliance met with the Knights of Labor industrial union at St. Louis in one of the mammoth political meetings of farmers and industrial laborers which would characterize this period of the dawning modern era. Such dire problems of the day as the scarcity of money, industrial wage reductions, and uniform railroad policies were addressed. And although a new political party was not an issue at St. Louis, the demands set forth at that convention would in the Nineties shape the platforms of the Populist Party.

1
Southern Cultivator, June 1890, p. 272.

2
Southern Cultivator, January 1889, p. 26.

3
Southern Cultivator, April 1889.

The St. Louis demands, called the Alliance "yardstick", included the call for free and unlimited silver coinage to effect the contraction of currency which beset this period in which the United States government had no policy on currency contraction.¹ St. Louis also brought the demand for government ownership of transportation and communication networks and advocated implementation of the "yardstick" through the election of state and national officials who would introduce legislation along "yardstick" lines.²

A rallying cause of the Alliance became its "war" against trusts and middlemen. The bagging trust was singled out for an all-out battle and boycott. Throughout the period from 1888 to 1890 Georgia farmers for the most part boycotted jute bagging for their cotton bales.³

In 1889 the Pike Farmers' Alliance "resolved to expel any member using jute bagging, not to have business transactions with merchants or ginners using it and approved the Olive bill and the Brady guano bill."⁴ In 1890, in a column entitled "Farmers' Alliance-- News of the Order," the farmers used the Journal to warn their agrarian brethern to stay away from "the loan agents." These agents, wrote the farmers, "charge about 50 % on money and make you give a mortgage on your house."⁵ A. P.

¹ Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 87.

² Ibid., p. 86.

³ Range, Georgia Agriculture, p. 141.

⁴ Southern Cultivator, June 1889.

⁵ P. Journal, 5 June 1890.

Middlebrooks, who was elected correspondent from the Pike 'home' Alliance N. 404 and was using the "privilege offered by the Barnesville Gazette to fill in on Alliance news," described his lodge as "one of the foremost in the country, but not first receiving bids on bagging and ties."¹ Middlebrooks also noted that the members were saved "a nice little sum" the year before, which gave Barnesville merchants "a chance". "Patronize home!" was his closing plea.

In 1890 at Ocala, Florida, the Supreme Council of the Southern Alliance began a series of meetings attended by Western Alliance members weighing Southern support for a new political party. Also at Ocala a controversial Southern land-loan program, the sub-treasury plan, was proposed. Under the sub-treasury plan, farmers would be able to borrow from the federal government to the extent of eighty percent of their crops' value at an interest rate of one percent.² At the Florida town the National Colored Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union met in a separate body from the white Alliance and pushed the "force" bill which was before Congress.³ The Blacks, however, rescinded an action condemning white Alliance actions.⁴ And significantly, all the Black delegates except the head of the Georgia Negro Alliance, E. L. Richardson, signed

¹
P. Journal, 30 June 1891.

²
The Populist Revolt, quoted in Reddick, "Negro in the Populist Movement," p. 27.

³
Reddick, "Negro in the Populist Movement," pp. 28-9.

⁴
Ibid., p. 29.

a resolution favoring a third party.¹

With the dawning of 1891 an alarming pattern of severe weather disasters began in the Pike area. The first of many disastrous cyclones struck in Pike and at Pike's neighbor town of Fayetteville. According to the Journal report:

. . . about ten beautiful homes and about twenty other residences were blown down /in Fayetteville/ as were a large warehouse and the academy which had just been completed.

Mr. W. T. Travis was instantly killed by being blown away. A daughter of Mr. J. W. Graham was also killed, and a negro baby was found dead on the street. About thirty were injured more or less.

On the same evening a small cyclone passed through /Pike/ a few miles South of town doing much damage to property and blowing down several houses. So far as we have been able to learn no one was hurt.²

The weather fury of the dawning Populist era in Pike county would be an astounding phenomenon having one of the most profound effects in shaping that political era in the cotton belt county. Mrs. Mattie Settles Whatley's testimony on the profound personal impact of the 1890's Pike cyclones on her ex-slave parents, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Settles, gives some indication of the trauma of the cyclones. According to Mrs. Whatley, her parents talked throughout their long lives about one cyclone which swept all their earthy possessions away, killed all the farm animals--including the little rabbits, but left Mr. and Mrs. Settles unharmed.³

In 1891, the Republican "force" bill was pushed aside in Congress by

1
Ibid.

2
P. Journal, 8 January 1891.

3
M. Whatley, interview, Atlanta Georgia, March 1981.

a coalition of Western Republicans and "solid South" Democrats. The Griffin News declared, "The Force Bill is Dead and the Country is glad."¹

In the same year, 1891, mammoth farmer and labor groups met at places like Washington City, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis to discuss the heated third party issue, extensively opposed by Southern allianscemen but supported by Tom Watson. At Cincinnati in May of 1891, the People's Party was born amid Southern dissension.² At an Indianapolis Southern Alliance meeting in November of 1891, Southerners refused the breach with the Democratic "solid South" which the new party necessitated.³

The Southern Cultivator, other conservative farm interests, and an alarmed Democracy urged the Alliance to stay out of politics; the cry fell on deaf ears. According to the People's Party Paper, founded in 1891, a sub-Alliance in nearby Monroe county as early as December of 1891 unanimously adopted a resolution favoring the People's Party "against any affiliation with the so-called Democratic party," and fully endorsed "every position taken by Hon..T. E. Watson, both at Indianapolis and at Washington City, pending the nomination and election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives."⁴

Whereas the Pike Alliance was . . . slower to accept the third party,

1

Griffin News, 7 January 1891.

2

Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Reddick, "Negro in the Populist Movement, p. 32.

3

The Populist Revolt, quoted in Reddick, p. 133.

4

People's Party Paper, 24 December 1891.

Pike's Alliance was nevertheless apparently involved in politics from its inception. Pike sent two native sons, ex-prohibitionist Judge T. J. Barrett and Captain J. H. Mitchell, to the Georgia legislature of 1890-91 as representatives elected on the Farmers' Alliance ticket. In an article from the Atlanta Constitution, reprinted in the home newspaper, Barrett, who would be prominent in the Populist movement in Pike, was described as a justice of the peace, a County commissioner for 18 years ("longer than any man in the County"), "a farmer all his life," a President of the Pike County Alliance, and a first sergeant and eventual 2nd lieutenant in the Confederate company of which his colleague, Captain Mitchell, was commander."¹ Mitchell was described as farm-reared, a County commissioner, a former judge of Pike's Inferior Court--attaining the judgeship soon after reaching 21 years of age; one of the oldest members of the Georgia legislature (having served that body in 1859).²

Mitchell did not serve his (fourth) time in the legislature because Pike's representation was again reduced, but Barrett was seated and soon gained notoriety by urging the legislature to adopt the Ocala platform in its entirety. Though the home newspaper was not keen that a native son hence was "severely criticized by some of the papers of the state"—that "the Rome Tribune goes for him in no mild way,"³ the editor of Pike's official newspaper (while he published the Ocala Platform) attacked

1

P. Journal, 3 September 1891.

2

Ibid.

3

P. Journal, 1 October 1891.

Alliance political efforts from the outset. Under the heading "Anti-Alliance Politics", Journal editor Perry Lee wrote:

. . . We question wisdom /sic/ of the president of the State Alliance abandoning his duties . . . and going into a rough and tumble fight for the nomination to Congress. He has virtually drugged the Alliance with the worst feature of politics and though he may get to Congress his success will be at the expense of the Alliance.

. . . We hear nothing now about cotton bagging or the Jute Trust. In every paper is stated the county alliance of such county . . . put out, or nominated or endorsed, so and so for different offices . . .

. . . It is time that some one was speaking out . . . that farmers who may be blindly following political aspirants may stop and reflect¹

This voice of the Democracy went unheeded as he warned the Alliance, "If you must select men for Congress and Legislature, leave off making selection of local candidates. This makes you a political party seeking every office and dooms the Alliance."²

The local Pike Alliance in these economically pressing times continued in its economic programs, realizing in 1891 the great dream of a year before: an Alliance warehouse at Barnesville. Bidding for public patronage by the end of summer of 1891 was the enterprise of which Pike Alliancesmen had said, "/We/ want it, Barnesville wants it and we can have it, and we must have it. It will benefit every cotton man in this section and it will bring 2,000 bales more cotton to Barnesville each season, with the trade that is attached to it."³ And for a while the Pike Alliance kept

1

P. Journal, 17 July 1891.

2

Ibid.

3

P. Journal, 20 August 1891.

up its numbers, as about seventy delegates were present at the regular meeting of the county Alliance, described in the July 16, 1891 issue of the Pike Journal.¹ The local Alliances continued also as a social outlet for Alliancemen and their families. In July of 1891 an Alliance picnic filled the town of Barnesville with Alliancemen and their wives. In the same month, the Prospect Monroe Alliance hosted a grand rally for which Alliance advocates were told to "come with a well-filled basket" and hear the Barnesville Brass Band.²

But more and more the focus of the Pike Alliance and the Southern Alliance generally shifted to the political areas. And there would begin the period of the 1890's when Pike county, and much of the nation would be embroiled in revolutionary, sometimes violent politics centered around the rise of the third party movement. The Populist movement and era was an unveiling of the great problems of the dawning twentieth century. The movement grew of the profound suffering the nation's factory workers and farmers were experiencing because of the devastating effects of depression on a rapidly industrializing, manufacturing centered economy. Populism represented a last effort of America's once preeminent farming classes to resist the unqualified ascendancy of the Big Business, corporate manufacturing ruling order destined to forge America's indelible imprint upon the twentieth century world.

Populism came during a time when hordes of unemployed men and tramps roved through parts of America, and some of the nation's first labor

1

P. Journal, 16 July 1891.

2

Ibid.

strikes were being met with armed resistance and militia bullets, as strikers were confronting corporations' private armies in pitched battles. It was a time when women's groups were agitating in protest of their suffrage rights and helping lead often violently opposed local prohibition 'wars'. Large Northern cities thronging with darker new European immigrants fleeing Europe's dire economic conditions were experiencing the brunt of an upsurge of white racism. In cities, social problems such as overcrowded tenement housing, juvenile delinquency, poverty, disease, and rampant crime would be met with practical applications of "social engineering" policies grounded in the nascent social sciences. Through the emergence of a social science-based philosophy and credo to fuel the triumphing age of science, machines, and materialism, traditional Bible-centered religion came under the onslaught of Higher Criticism of the Bible. Darwinism and the new 'anthropology' became the basis of racist dogma. And by the time of the 1890's, "Conservative Darwinism was standard doctrine in thousands of American pulpits, universities, and newspaper offices."¹ And in this era of alarming crime rates in many American sections, the darkest post-slave period of lynchings of Blacks--involving live cremations, beheadings, and medieval tortures erupted in the South. The savagery occurred against the background of the depression which would cause the era to be called "the Heartbreaking Nineties". One symbolic introduction to the era in Pike county, Georgia was a Pike Journal notation at the end of 1891 from Meansville, a town in that county. The Meansville report solemnly declared, "A good many families are moving this fall and

1

Eric F. Goldman, Rendez-vous With Destiny, A History of Modern American Reform, 1st rev. ed. (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1956), p. 71.

the bailiffs are making some move."¹ Also in this distressing year, a "pretty school mistress" (white) at Concord in Pike slashed her throat in a suicide attempt over "desire for fine dress."² The Griffin News noted that since the teacher's recovery from shock, "she avows her intention of repeating the attempt."³

¹
P. Journal, 20 November 1891.

²
P. Journal, 20 August 1891.

³
Griffin News, 13 August 1891.

CHAPTER VI

HARD TIMES, WHITE REVOLT, BLACK INITIATIVES: THE CLIMACTIC YEAR 1892

Towards the end of 1891, the editor of the Southern Alliance Farmer traveled through Georgia's cotton belt and wrote of the terrible and distressing conditions through the area as cotton reached its lowest price in a third of a century. According to his Atlanta Constitution report "hundreds of men will be turned out of house and home, or forced to become hirelings and tenants in fields they once owned."¹ Also he declared "The doors of every courthouse in Georgia are placarded with the announcement of /sheriff's/ sales" in the "epidemic of distress and foreclosures of mortgages," sweeping the state.² The Alliance editor also noted that the roads were "full of negroes begging homes."³

In cotton belt Pike county, 1891, the year of cyclone destruction and bailiff driven departures would close with the sad report that had it not been for the large corn crops made the people's condition would have been distressing.⁴

The new year would begin with a Pike report that "There is no news in these quarters. The close pressing talk of hard times is the all

¹ Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 224.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ P. Journal, 11 December 1891.

absorbing topic. . . ."¹

In the new year, 1892, there would be epidemic lynchings of Blacks in the South. In this year the Griffin News kept bombarding this middle Georgia section with accounts of fierce crimes and atrocities centering on Blacks. With such headlines as "Five Hundred Negroes Threaten a Florida Town," the Spalding newspaper invoked images of racial genocide, and some nineteen of twenty-seven major 1892 News articles on Blacks portrayed them as violent or vicious, inviting lynching or other brutal reprisals.

As the Griffin News kept up its preoccupation with violence and crime, Pike county faced another year in its mounting crime wave. In 1892 it would be said in Pike that "murder is the order of the times."³ The year began with a murder trial appeal which moved Pike onto a course of preparing for a public hanging. But even as the gallows were being readied to claim the life of convicted killer Quick (white), Governor Northen stopped what would have been Pike's first hanging in fifty years.⁴ Thus temporarily the floodwaters of more savagery and loss of life in a gruesome 'tribal ritual' had been held back in Pike; the Journal, however,

1

P. Journal, 15 January 1892.

2

Griffin News, 25 October 1892.

3

P. Journal, 9 December 1892.

4

P. Journal, 4 February 1892.

quipped caustically, "There will not be a hanging in Pike yet."¹--But alongside the governor's mercy edict, the Pike newspaper printed the text of the law recently passed by the state legislature in response to the outcry of many sectors against lynching in Georgia and the South. The law providing for the speedy determination of criminal cases and penalties against lynch mobs was vague and made no strong provisions for its enforcement; and one can only wonder, because the Journal printed it at this time, whether there was talk afoot of lynching Quick.²

The Journal's sanctioning of public hangings was a widely held attitude, which, apparently, encouraged lynchings. And many Southern newspapers like the Griffin News persistently excused mob violence and justified the image that the white death squads were citizens' committees expediting the legal justice process. One of the newspaper's headlines in 1892 declared, for example, "Tennesseans Avenge the Outrage on a Young Lady--A Negro Would-be Rapist Meets Judge Lynch."³ And among its many 1892 articles supporting mob violence against Blacks, the Spalding newspaper printed the account that "a vigilance committee" of neighbors of a murdered Illinois doctor were organizing to take the doctor's convicted Black killer from jail and lynch him."⁴

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Griffin News, 20 May 1892.

4
Griffin News, 23 April 1892.

Yet concerning the crimes and suspected crimes of local Spalding and Pike Blacks, attitudes of the News and especially the Pike Journal were more ambiguous --a fact which is symptomatic of the transitional nature of the age in respect to race. For example, in the face of a ghastly murder--also of an aged white doctor and his wife--which occurred in January of 1892 just eight miles outside of Griffin, the News' reaction closely paralleled that of the Pike County Journal. Portraying the murdered 84 year-old Dr. Barrett and his wife as highly respected and beloved by neighbors, the Journal gave a gruesome description of one of the murder weapons, an iron shovel handle "broken and covered with blood and long gray hairs were attached to it."¹ Yet neither newspaper seemed alarmed over suspicions that a local white man with two Blacks from the area committed the "ghastly" murders, but all three were freed on their own recognizance by the Spalding superior court.² In a short piece under its "locals", the Pike newspaper simply noted that one of the Black suspects, whose fateful name was Jerry Holt, "passed through town Wednesday and attracted much attention."³

And, as Blacks in many parts of the South would begin in 1892 pledging their daring support of the Third Party, the News focused on the beginning wave of brutalities against Blacks in a banner Black Populist district of Texas. According to the local Spalding newspaper's report,

¹
P. Journal, 8 January 1892.

²
P. Journal, 1 April 1892.

³
Ibid.

a lynch mob in Waco, Texas searched out the land for the killers of the postmaster, satisfied themselves of one Black's guilt, then "strung the fellow up and left the body dangling from a tree limb."¹

In the News' own "back door", Pike county, the year would unfold a dark harvest of crime and death--including the trial of a white man named Trice for the murder of his brother;² the trial of a white man charged with assaulting a white woman;³ and the imprisonment, in default of \$300 bond, of a Black boy about fifteen years old for the poisoning of a white family (the Journal reported quite dispassionately on the matter).⁴

In addition to Pike's mounting crime rate, another significant change in the daily life of the Pike area became a certainty in 1892, as it was clear by January that Griffin had been chosen as the site of the permanent United States military encampment. In 1892 the Griffin News gave little detail or projection as to the important effect the military presence might have on this Georgia section. Instead the newspaper focused on the economic benefits Griffin expected from the encampment. According to the News' "conservative" figure, some \$70,000 in revenues per year was expected to funnel into the city because of the military presence.⁵

1

Griffin News, 23 April 1892.

2

Griffin News, 16 April 1892; P. Journal, 15 April 1892.

3

P. Journal, 2 December 1892.

4

P. Journal, 25 March 1892.

5

Griffin News, 27 January 1892.

In this year of high crime in Pike, crop failures, and worsening economic conditions brought about by the plunging price of cotton, the Journal stepped up its purely economic solution of urging the farmers to plant less cotton. Along with State Farm Secretary Nesbitt's ongoing crusade for diversified farming, the Pike newspaper printed a series of letters mostly in support of less cotton, though one apparently satirical letter by "Cottoneyed Joe" quipped, "It is an exploded idea that supply and demand regulate prices. I have heard Alliancemen who have recently learned how to 'argue' /sic/ big questions . . . prove that we have not raised too much cotton. . . ."1

In its cotton series, the Journal obviously concurred with one Meansville farmer's assertion that although a great part of the Pike farmers' condition was owing to the fact of being able to buy everything except cotton cheaper than they could raise it, "if we continue to neglect to raise something to live on at home some of us will be like the fellow who said if steamboats were selling at 50 cents he couldn't buy the paddle wheel."2 And, in keeping with one survival tactic of facing the hard times through self-help societies, the Meansville correspondent furthermore noted that Meansville and community had an Economical society, which "provided that a man is excusable for wearing patched clothes and not considered stingy if the accustomed table luxuries are absent when his neighbor dines with him."3

¹
P. Journal, 4 February 1892.

²
P. Journal, 15 January 1892.

³
Ibid.

"Now," concluded this same correspondent, "we need a society that provided in its by-laws that we raise our own hog and hominy at home and we will soon begin to realize that hard times are gone."¹

Another Journal correspondent, by contrast, emphasized the severe providential influences affecting the condition of the area's farmers in 1892. Noting that "So far we have had cold and rain--very few good days for the farmers and only one or two good Sundays for the preachers," he pointed to the good attendance, despite the rain and cold, at the Sunday preaching and Wednesday night prayer meetings at the /white/ Zebulon Methodist Church. He especially recommended the prayer meetings of not more than an hour in duration, where "The young and old who attend sing with the spirit /sic/. The prayers offered seem to come from the heart and there is good indication of revival grace and power."² His invitation to the hardpressed generation concluded with the exhortation of the Zebulon Methodist preacher in one of his regular ten-minute prayer meeting talks:

. . . What a tremendous weight of responsibility rests on every man and woman in this church. Here are the young and middle-aged and the old in our midst sailing on the rough sea of life. It is dark and stormy and they are far from the shore of life. What is the duty of the hour? Rekindle the light of God in your soul by prayer and faith. 'Let your light so shine before men that others may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.'³

1
Ibid.

2
P. Journal, 10 March 1892.

3
Ibid.

Ominous economic conditions throughout the nation became the all-absorbing topics as some twenty-one largely agricultural organizations, including the Georgia Alliance and the National Colored Alliance (including a Georgia delegation) converged on St. Louis in February of 1892. A latter day historian said St. Louis was a "motley gathering" at which "The radicals predominated both in numbers and noise."¹ The Griffin News headline on St. Louis, on the other hand, emphasized the rapprochement of North and South symbolized in the 1890 era mammoth protest gathering. The News noted, "The Bloody Shirt is Consigned to the Grave by Confederate and Federal Veterans," and it added "--How Georgia Got Representation for Her 110 Negro Alliancemen. . . ."²

The St. Louis meeting had been called to formulate a nationwide third party position for eight of America's industrial and agricultural organizations. But many uninvited groups rushed their delegations to the meeting, where National Alliance President Polk, a converted third party advocate, was elected convention president. Polk, who would emerge from the meeting as the favored presidential of the revolutionary naysant third party had the year before, detailed his plan to free the South of the Black presence. His plan advocated creating a separate state for Blacks preferably in an uninhabited section of Texas. And it advocated disfranchising whites who moved into the Black "reserve."³

¹
Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 132.

²
Griffin News, 25 February 1892.

³
Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. 43.

Also the National Colored Alliance was especially poorly treated at St. Louis, though the Griffin News' headline and piece on the conference suggested otherwise. According to the News' report, when Georgia Blacks' credentials of election were demanded at a caucus of the Georgia delegation, Gilmore was "appointed by Himphreys of Texas to represent the negro alliancemen of Georgia and given eleven votes, which would indicate that there are 110 negro alliancemen in Georgia."¹

What the News did not convey to its middle Georgia readers (though the Atlanta Constitution gave a report) was the fact that the white missionary Negro Alliance organizer Humphrey had at St. Louis--despite Blacks' angry opposition--initiated whites into the Black order for a membership fee of fifty cents.² White Georgia alliancemen J. L. Gilmore, whom Humphrey had designated as Georgia's official Colored Alliance lecturer price to St. Louis, was among the whites inducted. Humphrey then sought the opportunity to assure third party success--despite what might have been Black disapproval of the party--and gave Georgia Blacks' eleven votes to Gilmore to cast for the party. When the especially angry Georgia Blacks refused to be a part of further proceedings, Gilmore took advantage of the small number of Blacks left in the caucus and cast all ninety-seven of the National Colored Alliance's votes in the behalf of the third party. The Blacks walked out en masse and predicted the new party would get no Black votes in October.³

¹ Griffin News, 25 February 1892.

² Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, pp. 36-37

³ Ibid., p. 37.

At St. Louis the majority rump meeting endorsed the People's Party on a platform of demands which differed in only a few important ways from the demands of Indianapolis. Among the few important changes made in the former convention's demands were planks for postal savings banks and (despite Southern opposition) government ownership of railroads, telephone systems, and telegraphs.¹ The Northerners at St. Louis, though indifferent to the sub-treasury plan, acquiesced to Southern demands for the plan in order to get passage of the plank for nationalized communications and rail networks. Free coinage remained intact.² And the call was issued for a convention to be held in Omaha on July 2 to nominate a presidential candidate. Workingmen of all sections were enjoined in support the new movement "to restore government of the Republic to the hands of the plain people with whom it originated."³

Even before St. Louis, just after Indianapolis, an Alliance in Pike's neighboring county Monroe made the fateful decision to break the chain of the "solid South" and endorse unanimously the third party.⁴ And a month before St. Louis, in January of 1892, the Pike Journal uncovered a secret circular being passed to the county Democratic Committeemen by leaders of the Third party. In the circular, members of the National Committee for

1

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 133.

2

The Populist Revolt, quoted in Reddick, "Negro in the Populist Movement," p. 35.

3

Arnett, Populist Movement, pp. 133-34.

4

People's Party Paper, 24 March 1892.

Georgia, including C. C. Post, instructed the Pike committeemen to

Get the name and post office of each white voter in your district. Designate the political party with which each intends to act by an X opposite his name in the column headed People's Party, Democratic, Republican or doubtful . . . When the roll is completed hand it to the chairman of the county committee without delay. . . .¹

The circular further urged, "Do not show the list or give any intimation as to what is being done to any but true friends of the cause.

Beware of politicians. Keep your own counsel."²

Thus only a few years after the collapse of the cataclysmic prohibition movement, on a wave of the people's suffering, an ominous new party threat was moving into Pike county. Pike Democrats were alarmed. Journal editor Parry Lee was especially distraught as the move came in the year that it was Pike's lot to select the state senator for the district.³ But Lee and the Democrats of the area could not stop the first wave of the third party.

Shortly after the Journal uncovered the secret circular came the disclosure in adjoining Butts county, for example, of the drastic result of that county's Democratic executive committee actions.--That Democratic committee had excluded from the primaries "the privilege of a number of good citizens the right to vote because of their prohibition proclivities."⁴

¹ P. Journal, 15 January 1892.

² Ibid.

³ P. Journal, 4 February 1892.

⁴ People's Party Paper, 28 January 1892.

According to the Butts Jackson News and Allianceman report in the People's Party Paper, that action helped bring about a move to set forth "an organization under the name of the People's Party" in Butts. But also, the Allianceman declared, the move was the result of hard times, as

The people of this section are all but bankrupted, and the cry from every quarter, relief! relief! . . . The shackles of depression are being more securely fastened about the people . . . The people are revolting, that is all.¹

Hence, it can be seen that in addition to severe economic conditions having given rise to the third party in this adjoining county, a measure like the Democratic primary--designed to hamper Black participation in Southern politics--was used against white prohibitionists, who fought back by adopting the third party. Such circumstances involved in Butts' Populist move provide an introduction and abstract on the radical social divisions and unorthodox allegiances which the Populist era spawned in the Pike area and throughout Georgia.

The Butts case graphically demonstrated historians' principle that Populism was not so much the threat to white rule, which Southern Democrats vehemently portrayed it to be, as it was a threat to the rule of a particular group of whites.² For, under pressure of losing their anti-prohibitionist drug rule, the Butts Democrats showed clearly that white rights were not their main concern. Furthermore, the example of the Butts prohibitionists' persecution through the use of the white primary, a method designed to persecute Blacks, indicates that conditions other

1

Ibid.

2

Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. xiii.

than those of an economic derivation could give dissimilar class groups a new common class denominator. In this case, for example, political persecution apparently became a potent common class denominator for white prohibitionists and Blacks.

Another lesson to be gained from the Butts example--and that of the 1880's Pike and Spalding prohibition movements--is the fact that certain of this post-war generation's concerns (e.g. temperance) could at this point in time produce class divisions along lines which superceded racial concerns. Yet historians, as seen, have concluded that race has always precluded class in Southern history and therefore class theories could not be successfully applied to unite poor Black and poor white farmers and factory workers, as the Populists tried to do.¹

And as seen, there are examples in oral testimony for the era that race did not always preclude class in the considerations of individuals. Consider, for example, the testimony of Zebulon's Baker sisters that their ex-Confederate father during the era opened his home and gave food to the homeless white and Black alike wandering along the rail tracks by his house.² Consider also that Blacks Warren and Lucy Settles during this period fed and gave work to suffering whites on adjoining lands as well as to suffering Black neighbors.³ Also the white Meriwether Baptist Church's enthusiasm during this era for a Pike area Black's preaching in

1

Southern Politics in State and Nation, quoted in Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. xiv.

2

Interview with Elizabeth and Ruby Baker, Zebulon Georgia, 2 January 1981.

3

Interview with Mattie Jo Settles Whatley, Atlanta, Georgia, 1 March 1981.

their services has been given as an example of subordination outside the political sphere of both race and class prejudices in this people.¹ And throughout this thesis examples of real racial tolerance in the Pike County Journal are offered to suggest that race was not always the 'supreme motivator' of men's actions in Pike county during the era under study.

For a time, at least, it would seem that more than anything, revolt and change were prime movers of Populist politics in Georgia and the Pike county area in 1892. About a month after St. Louis the Alliance Farmer declared that 1,600 of some 2,200 sub-Alliances in the land had filed resolutions endorsing the St. Louis demands.² In the wave of Alliance defections, nearby Monroe's fateful third party involvement grew as another of that county's sub-Alliances unanimously endorsed the third party.³

During this period of ebbing Alliance influence in the South, the Pike Journal printed letters which gave evidence of anti-Tom Watson sentiments and of in-fighting among the Pike alliancemen.⁴ And although in one letter Tom Watson was called an unpopular traitor, Watson received better Journal coverage in this period than Pike Democrats would show

¹
11. Meriwether Vindicator, quoted in Wall, "Blacks of Meriwether," p.

²
Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 152.

³
People's Party Paper, 24 March 1892.

⁴
P. Journal, 19 February 1892; 25 March 1892.

later in the year.¹ For Watson was becoming the focus of the great battle beginning in Georgia over the Populist party. It would be a profound struggle which would pit family members against each other and would cause civil unrest and violent eruptions throughout the state.

Tom Watson was often blamed for the drastic decline of membership in the Alliance during this period, as from Washington and through the People's Party Paper he exalted the new party--which grew despite intense Democratic persecution throughout the state and other parts of the South. It grew despite merchants reported systematic refusals of credit to Populists. It grew despite Populists being turned out of some churches. And although Populists were reportedly shot at and given no protection by the courts, still the new party grew.²

During this period after St. Louis, the Populists had begun to predominate in the Alliance but wanted to avoid breaking the organization. Also during this period, as it became apparent that Blacks would be the focus of the coming election, the Populists sought fusion with the Colored Alliance, rather than risk whites' hostility towards fusion with the Republican party.³

During this anxious period an effort was also made to shore up the (white) Alliance in Georgia and stop its actions supporting the third party. In April the state Alliance executive committee ordered all

1

P. Journal, 25 March 1892.

2

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 223.

3

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 153.

sub-Alliances endorsing the third party to rescind their action.¹ In compliance with the executive committee order, an April mass meeting of mostly Pike alliancemen (all whites presumably) repudiated the third party and declared that as the Democratic party of Pike county they resolved to use their influence and votes to correct the "evils" complained of by the (white) Alliance at Ocala and those complained of by the Democratic party, "especially those relative to the present financial and taxation policy of the government."²

Meetings or groups of local Pike Democrats, would make few broad policy statements in the Journal during the era. What they did say locally on issues through most of the era would seem to fit C. Vann Woodward's assessment that in 1892 state and national issues were subordinate in Georgia Democrats' minds "to questions of political expediency, party tradition and personalities."³ And while there would be much advertisement in the Journal of Democratic rallies and practical, 'machine' politics at election time, it will be seen that in 1892 and throughout the era (as chronicled by the Journal), Pike Democrats' most consistently enduring local 'policy' (and to some degree editor Lee's also) focused on reaction to Tom Watson and other Populists, and on race. The following unusually long statement of local Democratic policy, which appeared in the Journal alongside the "report on the "Alliance Democrats" decision, presents, it

1

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 153.

2

P. Journal, 15 April 1892.

3

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 144.

would seem, a classic study of the Pike Democrats' program and thought-- which conformed perfectly to Woodward's assessment of Georgia Democratic thought:

The hour has come for every man who loves Georgia, who loves his race, who loves his wife and children, who respects himself, to be man enough to avow his principles and define his position on the great issues of the day . . . What do Donnelly, DANIEL /sic/, Post, Watson, Ellington, 'et hoc omne genus' ask the Alliancemen of Georgia to do? We must leave every principle for which we contended in that grand old organization . . . leave the Democratic party--the party which has defended the South and held in check the aggressive and destructive radicalism of our country . . . leave the wise counsels of the greatest and best men in our land; and accept what in lieu of all these things? Why, the leadership of C. C. Post, a Republican, a Beast-Butlerite, who comes here to teach the people of Georgia vandalism and the worst characteristics of radicalism, the blighting idea of agrarianism /sic/ and negro equality. Are we so degraded, have we so far lost our manhood and self respect that we are ready to bend our necks and take such humiliating yoke? . . . Are we ready to follow the leadership of the Erratic /sic/ Watson or the cranky ideas of Ignatius Donnelly? . . . What are we asked to sanction? Government ownership of railroads, telegraphs and telephones, with their million officers, and pay the Federal soldier the difference between depreciated greenbacks and gold coin. And what do they propose to give Georgians should we agree to all this. Why fold us up in the ample bunting of the United States flag with Sambo and Federal troopers. Georgians, are we ready for the companionship? We feel constrained to ask pardon for the question. . . .¹

One could assume by this anti-Black tirade that the Pike Democrats underestimated the potency of Populist sentiment and in April merely had not the foresight to see the impending reality of a full-fledged, organized Pike affiliate of a national third party about to openly vie for "Sambo's" vote.

But that was not necessarily the case. For had the Pike Democrats not seen this type of Black balance of power situation just a few years

¹

P. Journal, 15 April 1892.

before in the prohibition movement? But in the same way that economic expedience would not prove for white Southerners a strong enough value to force them to implement fairer wages and fairer politics to check Blacks migrations from the South, political expedience would not be a strong enough value to completely silence Democratic racial invective in the Pike County Journal. For, even by the time the 1892 battle for the Black vote would be intense (and certain Pike Blacks would bid for fair play in public education), the Democratic Journal would print pieces alleging Blacks social inferiority and inferring an urgent need to keep them in an inferior position.

On the other hand, the explanation for this seeming partial lack of political savoir-faire in the Pike Democrats could be simply that the racist Journal pieces were studies in reaction, as the above mentioned "Republican Sambo" piece appeared in that newspaper just a week after an extraordinary Journal piece on Black office holders in Ohio. According to the Ohio article, which was written by a Black Virginian ex-congressman

. . . colored brethren of Ohio, like other Ohio men generally get their share of what is going, not excepting political offices . . .¹

The article, furthermore, discussed the fact that Black Ohio voters had required Republicans to pledge to distribute offices to them and that in United States government employment were some 2,395 Blacks, drawing salaries totaling \$1,370,663.² The Black ex-congressman's article in the

¹
P. Journal, 8 April 1892.

²
Ibid.

newspaper of this severely depressed dirt farmer county, concluded that while most of these Blacks were messengers, janitors, porters, etc., "comparatively few have arrived at the dignity of clerkship, not so much perhaps because of a want of capacity as because of the greater influence of the white brother in gaining the ear of the appointing power."¹

Such statements on the part of a literate, privileged Black would, needless to say, have aroused vehement anger and consternation in the downtrodden, economically hardpressed white farmers of Pike county--anger and consternation specifically of the type detailed in the "Republican Sambo" Journal piece.

But aside from the Journal's liberalness in printing the Ohio piece was probably the fact of the Democratic newspaper wanting to "shock" the Pike Democratic party into action against the third party threat and the ever present danger of a Republican victory at the polls, Force Bill rule, and the return of federal bayonets. Had not the Journal, in an editorial letter less than a month before the Ohio piece, urged the Pike Democratic party to "shake off the lethargy which seems to have taken hold"?²

Another effect of Southern Democratic racial policy, as evidenced in the Pike "Sambo" statement, was that it helped propagandize for the opposition. Especially during the Populist period, this tendency (described by Gaither and others) of Southern Democrats to label anything hostile to them as pro-Negro, would help the Populists (in their campaign

1

Ibid.

2

P. Journal, 26 February 1892.

of limited financial resources) to propagandize Blacks.¹ Also it was general Democratic "racial policy", according to Gaither, to make "few efforts to conceal an obvious anti-Negro bias."² --Hence 'solid South' white Democrats, "temperamentally conservative racially," would not be able to understand, "and therefore would not forgive, the actions of members who deserted their ranks to join a party that openly trafficked with the Negroes."³

As for the Pike and Georgia Populists' alleged greater willingness to traffic openly with Blacks, it will be seen that for the Democrats in Pike and other parts of the state, the emphasis was merely on the word "openly".

In the same month that the political revolution seemed quelled in Pike by the "Alliance Democrats" and by the "Sambo" inventive, Zebulon was joined by the revolution of a telephone line to Griffin, Barnesville, Milner, Weaver, and Williamson. Also in the same month the Journal gave only a suggestion that another type of revolution was stirring among some of the county's Black teachers.

The school commissioner, Barnesville's dispensary proponent Edward Elder, began his routine report by declaring " . . . The liberal appropriations which have been added to the public school fund and the important amendments which have been enacted in expansion of the public school

1

Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. 96.

2

Ibid., p. 95.

3

Ibid.

system have made this department second to none in importance in our county affairs."¹ Elder furthermore went so far as to reveal that the board of education had "thought it proper" to require a \$10,000 bond to be made by the county school commissioner "To guarantee a faithful performance of the trust imparted to his keeping." (His salary "of not exceeding \$405" for the current year was provided by the board.)²

Making no clear reference to the unrest among the Blacks teachers, Elder did however urge that "Neighborhood school factions should be disregarded, and the divided meagre individual resources concentrated upon schools conveniently and wisely located with school houses comfortably constructed and equipped."³ And in this month when long lists of sheriff's receiver's sales flooded the Journal--and some of the teachers' privations had yet to be divulged by the Journal--Elder's report revealed thus that a Black teacher would face some type of legal action on a charge of defrauding the county. He noted,

. . . We regret to report that the board of education finds it their duty to note one case brought to their knowledge wherein a colored school teacher has been detected in defrauding the public school fund by making false returns of the attendance of pupils upon /sic/ her school, and a formal charge will be brought against the teacher for proper consideration.⁴

1

P. Journal, 8 April 1892.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

4

Ibid.

Also Elder cryptically noted, "I am pleased to report that a different system has been adopted for 1892 for the employment of teachers which will secure a more equitable division of the public school fund and provide better safeguards against fraudulent school reports."¹

Thus began a drama set to erupt alongside the radical politics of this year in Pike county. In some ways this drama would produce a more radical, unprecedented protest role for some Pike Blacks than would the fiery, revolutionary politics.

And yet, as heated as might have been these opening salvos of conflict, they would seem almost insignificant by comparison to the savage outbreaks of lynching which would occur before the year was over in neighboring Populist stronghold Monroe county and other parts of the South. One such savage atrocity occurred in April at Inverness, a mining town near Ocala--where just two years before the huge assembly of white Southern alliacemen and Black alliacemen had met in separate bodies, with the Blacks rescinding a bold resolution to condemn certain white Alliance actions and voting to support the Force Bill and the Third Party.² By 1892, however, the Griffin News reported that a race riot appeared imminent in the Ocala section, as a masked mob of whites had taken four Blacks from jail--including a woman?--and brutally hanged them.³ And though Blacks had congregated in great numbers at the site of the

1
Ibid.

2
Atlanta Constitution, 9 December 1890.

3
Griffin News, 21 April 1892.

lynchings and had yet to make a move, the News warned that they were well armed with Winchesters and were in great strength at the mines.¹

The brutality at Inverness was but one example of how lynching and Blacks' third party activities followed in close proximity during the period. In Texas, where Blacks would actually be elected to office on the Populist ticket, a pattern of vile tortures, lynchings--and finally the forced flight of Black Populists from their prize lands--had already developed in a banner Populist district of Texas by April, and the Griffin News began flaunting the violence.²

Alongside its April report on this beginning vile trend in Texas, was a News announcement of a national convention of Southern Blacks to be held in Summer at Cincinnati "for the purpose of taking effective steps to enlist the sympathy of all civilization in behalf of justice."³ According to the News, the convention planners urged that "It is not intended that the convention shall be in any sense a political one, nor that political parties, as such, shall in any way enter into the deliberation."⁴

A few days after lynching atrocities in Texas and the announcement and plea for a Black anti-lynching convention, over one thousand

1
Ibid.

2
Griffin News, 23 April 1892.

3
Ibid.

4
Ibid.

delegates to the Southern Baptist convention met in Atlanta. Governor Northen, who had a rather favorable anti-lynching record, was elected the Baptists' vice president. The Methodist Conference was convened shortly thereafter, but during the period a white Methodist clergyman declared (at Atlanta) that the outcome of a Populist victory would be "negro supremacy, mongrelism," and the "destruction of the Saxon womanhood of our wives and daughters."¹

By May the Pike Alliancemen, angry over a Griffin proposal to retain the cooperative Alliance warehouse's profits to build another warehouse, demanded their share of the earnings.² It is not clear whether this occurrence served to demoralize or alienate the Pike farmers from the "Alliance Democrats" cause, but about a week after the warehouse confrontation, the complete platforms of the People's Party and Ocala were published in the Journal.³

Another clear signal in May of a break in Pike's 'solid South' ranks occurred at adjoining Upson County and was published throughout Georgia in the People's Party Paper. At Upson some four hundred voters, apparently all whites, reportedly endorsed the third party.--But quite fatefully for Pike's recently defeated ex-Prohibitionist, Alliance legislator Thomas Barrett, the Populist paper mentioned only him and Populist Upson speaker W. L. Peek by name. The connection was clear in the widely

1

T. Warren Aiken, quoted in Atlanta Journal, 7 April 1892.

2

P. Journal, 13 May 1892.

3

P. Journal, 27 May 1892.

circulated Populist paper: Barrett and some four hundred others had endorsed the People's Party after hearing a long Peek speech, of which the concluding injunction was, "Have no fear of negro supremacy--rather fear plutocracy."¹ The burning Watson watchword and provocative occurrences at Upson were destined to have a profound effect upon Barrett's political career.

As provocative as Peek's May Upson visit might have been, however, a May report of an altogether different and astounding nature would in posterity be the most resounding note of Pike's explosive condition in spring of 1892. For, it was in May, in two inconspicuous lines under "Milner Locals," that the Pike County Journal Milner correspondent declared,

There are more morphine and opium consumers, I am pained to say, here in Milner than any town in the state of equal size. It is an appalling fact . . . ²

But with a note of foreboding the Milner correspondent concluded it was a "hard" problem for "our modern reformers."³

The Milner correspondent's reference to Georgia statistics on the matter suggested the worst: that hard drug use was as widespread in Georgia as perhaps the severe liquor problem of the 1890's.

But the origin of the problem in the South could probably be traced to the same source of so many bitter problems in the South--namely, the

1

People's Party Paper, 10 June 1892.

2

P. Journal, 27 May 1892.

3

Ibid.

bitter war of the states. Morphine had been used extensively in the amputating stalls and war hospital camps, which would have been nothing more than death camps without such drugs.

Hence, the post-war generation had one more dark heritage--so many of them were probably drug addicts.--Witness, for example, the frequent drug cure advertisements in the People's Party Paper, the Pike County Journal, and the Griffin News. One such advertisement declared, for example, "Drunkenness and Morphine Habits Speedily Cured by the Georgia Liquor and Opium Cure Company's Improved Treatment--No mineral poisons. A purely Vegetable Remedy."¹ The advertisement of Dr. B. A. Syms on Alexander Street in Atlanta declared in the People's Party Paper "Morphine Habit Cured in Twenty Days! No Suffering!"²

As to the logistics of the manufacture or procurement of these drugs in the Pike area, more research is needed and more specific source material. But as morphine and opium are derived from the poppy seed, it can perhaps be reasonably assumed that procurement was not particularly difficult. Also further indication of the nature of drug trafficking in Boston at the turn of the century provides some insight as to drug use in America during the epoque; and, as the information was found in a middle Georgia farm journal, the Middle Georgia Farmer in 1908, the following facts on a Boston legislative anti-cocaine bill might have had particular implications for Georgia. According to the Pike area

¹
P. Journal, 11 January 1894.

²
People's Party Paper, 17 May 1895.

publication's report on the anti-cocaine bill prepared by Dr. Charles Harrington of the Massachusetts State Board of Health,

Harrington claimed 'hundreds upon hundreds of Boston boys are slaves to the cocaine habit, that the harmful drug can be purchased in saloons, from cheap drug stores and on the street from illegal agents as freely as one can buy fruit from street hawkers, and that juvenile courts are filling up with youths who have admitted that their downfall can be traced to the viscious drug habit.'¹

Like this twentieth century Boston effort, efforts to address the 1890's Milner, Pike county drug epidemic apparently took a political course, as a reform ticket was run in a Milner election close to the time of the Journal disclosure on the town's dark problem.² It is not clear whether any Pike white or Black missionary groups addressed Milner's problems or the devastating problems of alcoholism, poverty, and crime which faced Pike county during these tumultuous years. But it seemed for the most part that men's minds were especially taken with politics and the immediacy of political approaches to their problems, as shortly after the Peek Upson meeting, the 'solid South' dike in Pike broke. The floodwaters of insurgency and change poured over troubled Pike again. Early in June, according to the People's Party Paper, some three or four hundred "determined men" at Zebulon heard "fervid and eloquent addresses" and, amid "the wildest enthusiasm," declared for the revolutionary party.³ The men also organized formally to send delegates to Griffin, Atlanta, and

¹
Middle Georgia Farmer, 12 March 1908.

²
P. Journal, 15 January 1892.

³
People's Party Paper, 17 June 1892.

the congressional convention. Watson's paper heralded it "a great day for old Pike county . . . the one upon which she declared herself free from political slavery."¹

Nothing could be found on the Pike meeting in the Griffin News or available issues of the Pike County Journal. The message, however, was issued to all of Georgia that, with Thomas Barrett again on hand,

Conservative, brave old Pike is now thoroughly aroused and will give a good majority for the People's Party. Glory Hallelujah! Let us pray for the editor of the Barnesville Gazette.²

Thus, despite the efforts of Alliance Democrats and a Democratic 'shaking' in Pike, the revolutionary Populist party took up its fitful occupation of Pike. And thus the anti-Populist protests of the editor of the Pike County Journal (and of the editor of the Barnesville Gazette in particular) would be mingled in the wail of Democratic editors who had been unable to hinder the march of the People's Party through Georgia.

But in Georgia Populism would have a rough and violent march even before its first test at the polls. Well before the October election, a surly Quitman crowd hurled rocks at state Populist chairman, People's Party Paper managing editor C. C. Post and Populist gubernatorial candidate W. L. Peek³ In August the Populist national presidential candidate Weaver discontinued his Georgia campaign after rotten eggs were thrown at him and his wife at Macon. Some days later Tom Watson was howled down

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 231.

at an Atlanta speaking effort.¹

Weaver blamed the violence in Georgia on "young roughs who infested the towns" and were allegedly urged on by behind-the-scenes instigators.² The violence continued in towns through the state, as Georgia's townspeople were mainly Democratic except in the factory settlements. And the Democratic townspeople tended to disdain the Populists.³ Soon after the unhindered June 4th Zebulon Populist meeting, the Democrats, for example, took a hand in a Populist meeting at Barnesville and, according to the Pike Journal, affected confusion there.⁴

In this Pike mill town where anti-Populist disruption was set to escalate, it was not clear in the Democratic press whether some kind of Populist mill strategy was in effect. But the Journal revealingly asserted that seven hundred! persons had been expected at the Barnesville rally, although only thirty persons assembled for the meeting.⁵ There is reason to believe that the Populists had considerable appeal for Barnesville's mill population, as during the era a bitter anti-Populist effort centered at Barnesville and, furthermore, the industrial proletariat was known to be one of Southern Populism's chief constituencies. In addition to town

1
Ibid.

2
Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 152.

3
Ibid.

4
P. Journal, 24 June 1892.

5
Ibid.

factory workers, the diverse Populist ranks included mainly the "agrarian masses"--tenants, poverty-ridden small landowners, and "a surprising number of large landowners."¹ But Populist ideology originated with landowning, individualistic, middle-class white farmers, like Tom Watson--who often exploited tenant labor--although Woodward concluded that Populists were more exploited than they were exploiting, and landowners in these hard times were often "in the same boat" as tenants.²

Also Populist appeal to industrial town sections was strengthened by the severe economic conditions factory workers experienced during the 1890's depression. And although it is not known whether Barnesville's, Griffin, or Forsyth's mill workers suffered unusual deprivation during the era--inhuman, unimaginable conditions existed among mill workers in Atlanta's Exposition mills district, where the mill workers received "the magnificent sum of 36 cents a day for their labor" and the dead remained unburied, as there were

. . . rooms wherein eight and ten members of one family /were/ stricken down, where pneumonia and fever and measles /were/ attacking their emaciated bodies; where there /was/ no sanitation, no help or protection from the city, no medicine, no food, no fire, no nurses--nothing but torturing hunger and death.³

Unlike in Atlanta, farm lands and farming classes--from which mill workers had issued--were within close range of the Pike area mills. Also

1

Woodward, Tom Watson, pp. 187, 218.

2

Ibid., p. 218.

3

People's Party Paper, 26 October 1894.

Pike area merchants and manufacturers probably had strong ties to farm life. But conditions were probably poor in the Barnesville mills, as conditions throughout Georgia were bad for farmers and mill workers in more recently established factories.

It should be noted that by comparison to the vicious, systematic campaign against Populism which developed at Barnesville, at Zebulon--a simple railroad juncture and county seat hub of Pike farmer revolt--the excesses of the fierce battle developing between Populists and Democrats would seem minor. For at Barnesville--a town (from a white perspective) of merchants, farmers, cottage industries, small manufacturers, tradesmen, and professional in rapport with mill workers--there would develop an elaborate, sinister Democratic dragnet aimed especially at debauching the Black voter masses.

At adjoining Monroe county, however, a strong Populist movement would evolve in the most brutal, vicious climate of racial oppression. For in that Pike area county, as in Texas, Populism would be countered by white brutality and lynchings of Blacks.

The first wave of lynch mob brutality struck at Monroe shortly after the Pike white contingency's June 4th meeting endorsing the Populists. On June 11th a Black named Anderson Moreland, accused of rape, was annihilated at Forsyth.¹ Nothing was said of it in the Griffin News or available issues of the Pike County Journal, though, as said, the News chronicled lynchings and race riots throughout the land, as well as global

1

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States 1889-1918 (New York: Arno Press, 1969)

violence of every description. Hence, little is known of a personal nature about Moreland's lynching and alleged rape assault in this county where Blacks' polls outnumbered whites' and Populists would make extensive use of a successful Democratic method of conveying Blacks in large numbers to the polls.

Also in this adjoining county where white commitments to the third party began already in 1891, a large convention of Monroe Blacks would by August, despite Moreland's lynching, take a fateful, rash anti-Democratic stand which would in turn be rehearsed throughout the state.

Especially Tom Watson among Populists and Governor Northen spoke against lynching during this dark lynch period. Lynching protests often appeared in the People's Party Paper. Alongside the June announcement of Pike's third party action, for example, the Populist paper printed Virginia Colored Alliance Superintendent W. H. Warwick's notice that " . . . no people better realize the need of unity of purpose and action to suppress the outrage penetrated upon white and colored alike by class legislation, ballot-box stuffing, lynch law mobs, than the colored people."¹ Warwick concluded "Every thinking colored man in this country . . . stand /sic/ ready to act with any party that will go to work to remedy these evils."²

The Populists, however, would not in the course of time come up with any strong practical programs against lynching not even in Texas sections,

1

People's Party Paper, 17 June 1892.

2

Ibid.

where they were in power and had strong Black support.¹ In mob prone Monroe, as will be seen, a noted Black Republican would hold Governor Northen up to Blacks as their anti-lynching champion--and the Populists would be accused of a mob identity. But Monroe Blacks would nevertheless continue on a radical course--and lynching would become epidemic.

Tom Watson, on the other hand, could have further dramatized the lynching crisis from Washington, but he concentrated on other issues. Through the Omaha convention period he got much publicity introducing bills which sought legislation for a graduated income tax; the establishment of the controversial sub-treasuries; increased currency; removal of tariff on jute; regulation of private detective agencies like the infamous Pinkerton agency; abolition of the national banking system; prevention of advance payment of interest on government bonds. He was strongly opposed on all of these Alliance/third party demands and was able to get passage only on a provision for the nation's first rural mails delivery experiment (RFD).²

Also during this period, Watson's attacks accusing an Alabama congressman of being drunk on the floor of the house of Representatives brought talk of his expulsion from that body. Watson's highly controversial account of the charge, in his Campaign Book Not a Revolt! It is a Revolution, was widely circulated and he was further cursed and applauded in Georgia and became the topic of all discussion.

1

Robert Saunders, "Southern Populists and the Negro," Journal of Negro History, LIV (July, 1969), 248-49.

2

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 145.

As the election of 1892 approached, the campaign of 1892 formally began with the Republicans meeting in convention in Minneapolis on June 7, and the Democrats in Chicago on June 21st. Both parties tended towards vague stands on the issues of the day. The only clear Republican stand was reaffirmation of the "American doctrine of protection," and the McKinley Act. Concerning Black votership in the South, the implication was also made of a demand for an effort like the Force Bill to assure every American a free ballot.¹ The Republicans nominated Harrison for a second term.

The Democrats at Chicago also focused first on the Force Bill, calling it a dangerous violation of the Democratic party's most cherished principles. They held for silver and gold coinage, but changed their previous position and advanced parity in the exchange of the metals. And their platform also proposed a tariff plank and denounced Republican protection. Generally the Democratic platform urged further restraint of trusts, restriction of immigration, improved waterways, and care for old soldiers. Grover Cleveland was the Democrats' presidential candidate.²

The Populists made dramatic demands at their July 2nd convention in Omaha; amid much excitement over economic and political conditions in the nation, they called their platform a Second Declaration of Independence. And when their platform, introduced by a "severe arraignment of existing conditions" nationwide, was adopted, the some four thousand assembled began yelling and cheering which lasted for thirty-four minutes as women

1

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 136.

2

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 137.

shrieked and wept, men embraced and kissed their neighbors, locked arms, marched back and forth, and leaped upon tables and chairs in the ecstasy of their delirium."¹

Their extensive platform of demands called for the federal government to issue all currency; free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold; an increase in money circulation to not less than \$50 per capita; a graduated income tax; limitation of revenues to the necessary expenses of government; government ownership, operation of rail, telegraph, and telephone systems; reclamation for settlers of lands of corporations held in excess of their actual needs and of those held by aliens.² Apart from their platform, the Populists wanted fair and liberal pensions; further restriction of undesirable immigration; abolition of private detective agencies; rigid enforcement of the 8-hour law for government employees; a Constitutional amendment for a single term for the President and popular election of Senators. They also recommended to the states the Australian ballot system, the initiative, and the referendum.

James Weaver was selected as the Populist presidential nominee. Weaver had been a brigadier general in the Union army, a Republican, then an Independent in coalition with Democrats, and the Greenback presidential candidate in 1880.

In this period of turbulent national Populist politics and Watson-directed attacks on government's and corporations' abusive labor policies,

1

Ibid., p. 142.

2

Ibid., pp. 139-40.

the Pike perspective is difficult to reconstruct, as apparently issues of the Journal are spotty. The Griffin News, however, apparently ignored Watson during this turbulent period. That newspaper, for example, did not so much as mention Watson's name in a provocative June 4th article on Blacks' aggressive political efforts in the Augusta section of the Tenth district, which Watson represented. The News report however emphasized that the Blacks would probably make a strong factor in the Prohibition fight, and "will have the balance of power in their hands."¹ Referring to a "long manifesto" signed by nearly all colored preachers and principals of colored schools in Augusta, the Griffin newspaper noted that Blacks of Richmond county had been urged to vote for Prohibition and not to sell their ballots.²

Concerning the prohibition issue in the foremost Populist district of the state, more research would be needed to see the extent to which this issue tied in with the infamous Watson-Major Black battle of 1892 in that "Terrible Tenth" district. But it is significant to note that as in Spalding and Pike in the 1880's, these Blacks supported prohibition--although the traditional, racist 'anthropological' view was that the African race had to have liquor or--unlike whites' who clung to liquor--the Blacks reverted to savagery.

Also the Black Augusta teachers' and preachers' independent prohibition effort in this Populist district demonstrated, with Pike county

1

Griffin News, 14 June 1892.

2

Ibid.

Black teachers' revolutionary efforts in 1892, a principle of this thesis: that Blacks seized on the spirit of revolt astir--to take their own, independent activist actions, outside of the formal structure of organized political parties. Also in this era when the Griffin News still had liberality enough to publish the Augusta article despite the effect it might have had on Pike area Blacks' politics, such efforts of Black teachers and preachers signaled the end of an era of open, outwardly-directed Black political efforts and the coming of a new era. In the dawning era, Black preachers and teachers in the South would be forced into the stewardship of a long, internal purification within the race. On their shoulders would fall the urgent cause of uplifting, educating, and instilling Christian discipline and holding power in this people walking a narrow path around racial annihilation.

Also it should be noted that the Augusta prohibitionist effort formed one more link in the chain of truly liberated Black political expression found in the post-Reconstruction prohibition movement in Georgia. On the other hand, Blacks would in Populism be part of a movement which, though it was a tremendous improvement over the flagrant racism of the Democrats, maintained in the Pike area its 'overt' organizational racial policy of having a Black contingency at Populist mass meetings, but apparently keeping the Blacks segregated.¹ On the other hand, it will be seen that the 'covert' or 'after dark' racial policy of the Pike white Populists--and Democrats to some degree--involved probably the last vestige of a dying era when white and Black Southerners, who had

1

Charles Crowe, "Tom Watson, Populists, and Blacks Reconsidered," Journal of Negro History, LV (April, 1970), 109.

grown up alongside each other, sat and talked in the Negro quarters. And while the movement Populism would thus have some merit in producing such interracial communication in a violent, viscious lynch period, it would be seen that it had not the moral commitment to Blacks that the Pike area prohibitionist movement had. When the pressure and persecution came intensely upon the white Populists, their movement would be unmasked on what it really stood for --namely, determined, desperate opportunity.

But for a while at least, before the toll of bloodshed and haunting, systematic persecution had mounted, the Populists showed promise of producing a revolution in 'solid South' racial and class oppression. In 1892 their Georgia leader, Tom Watson, "hammered" on this theme from Washington and through the People's Party Paper. But Watson did not want his energies channeled into the 1892 race for the governorship. Because of his preference for a congressional seat, the Populist gubernatorial nomination went to W. L. Peek, the author of the 1880's 'slavery bill' so hated by Blacks and poorer white farm classes because, under the guise of being an anti-vagrancy measure, it would have bound them over to landlord farmers and merchants from whom they had to receive advance payments on their crops.¹ Peek, it should also be recalled, had in May of 1892 stood before the Upson meeting (attended by Pike ex-prohibition, ex-Alliance legislator, Thomas Barrett) and dismissed the threat of Negro supremacy.²

1
P. Journal, 26 August, 1892.

2
People's Party Paper, 10 June 1892.

At the Populist state nominating convention in Atlanta, Peek would make an even bolder gesture towards Blacks than he had at Upson. In compliance with the Populist 1892 Southern strategy of relying heavily on token Black involvement at the highest level of local party machinery,¹ Peek let Populist Black leader John Mack, one of two Blacks at the Atlanta convention, second his gubernatorial nomination.² Peek declared at the convention, "the nigger has been in politics since the war and will be there until the last trump has sounded. The only trouble in this case is that /the Democrats/ think /we/ will use the negro vote."³

After the Atlanta convention, Peek veered from a steadfast Watson position of refusing fusion with the Republican party in Georgia to attract the Black vote. He made open overtures for Republican fusion.⁴ But even before the Republican convention in August would decide not to nominate a slate, middle-class Blacks like Atlanta lawyer activist W. A. Pledger were spearheading "Northen Clubs" to elicit Black support of the incumbent Democrat on the merits of his promise of an anti-lynching bill and his promise of a strong anti-lynching stand, and because of appropriations he had added to the budget for education, and the fact that he

1

Saunders, "Populists and the Negro," 240.

2

Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. 97.

3

Ibid.

4

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 153.

was in a position to make good this promise.¹

Northern's anti-lynching record in the Pike area would, according to this writer's research, have probably seemed exemplary. For he had intervened to stop Pike's public hanging of a white man at the beginning of the year. And although it is not clear whether he personally intervened in any way in the Monroe lynchings, it does seem apparent that he either directly or indirectly influenced the arrival in Monroe of his Black spokesman William Pledger immediately after the second lynch brutality near Forsyth. Also Northern's reaction to appeals to override an Atlanta Black's death sentence appeared in the News in summer of that year. According to that News report, the second appeal of the Atlanta Black was a strong one in which many of the "prominent citizens of the city /i.e. whites/ asked the Governor to exercise his power and send the negro to the penitentiary for life." Though the convicted Black continually protested his innocence in the charge of murdering a Black woman, Governor Northern, according to a News headline, "Shed Tears But . . . Could Not Interfere."²

Governor Northern would, however, be able to intervene a second time in Pike's 1892 Quick hanging case--to stop the white man's execution after a second trial had also rendered a death sentence.³

In this election year the Governor also endorsed the Democrats'

¹
Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. 98.

²
Griffin News, 17 July 1892.

³
P. Journal, 9 December 1892.

Chicago program and emphasized extension of railway commission powers and economy in administration.¹ But Governor Northen--like Tom Watson--received relatively little attention in the News, and even less, apparently, in the Journal. It seemed that in these two newspapers, as generally throughout the state, state issues were superceded by national issues even more so than they had been in 1890.²

But some local issues also prevailed in what would be a turbulent campaign in Pike. As the campaign heated up, the Journal would focus much attention on Peek's 'slavery' bill and on an anti-Republican effort; for Populism had stirred up the Blacks of Pike county and the surrounding area. The Barnesville Gazette, on the other hand, apparently responded to the Populist threat in the typical Democratic manner of resorting to expediency and personalities.³ A Monroe county Populist, for example, sent to the People's Party Paper the following Gazette piece deriding local Pike area whites and especially ridiculing local Black Populist 'uncles':

Coz. B. H. Hardy has withdrawn the last atom of his sympathy for the People's Party, and an earthquake is the result. Now he calmly views the situation as Cleveland dictates, and allows Uncle Billy Waggoner to keep the flies off him. They will elect Cleveland and lunch with Freddie Douglass, too.

Captain Corley has, up to now, held the back door ajar for the P. P. boys to sneak back through, but now he says 'By Jack, we had better try 'em a whack at the front.

If anybody wants to fight just let them ask Uncle Monroe

1

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 144.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

Moore about the tumble bug crop. It is said the buzz of a horse fly will put him into a 2:10 trot.

Uncle John Abercrombie has regained his equilibrium he walks on his feet once more. Uncle Billy Parker is having prepared a fine, large sized crow for his own special benefit. . . .¹

But despite such slander and derision, and whatever economic pressures may have been brought to bear upon them by Democratic merchants and employers, Pike county Blacks were on a decided third party course-- as were Blacks in neighboring Monroe county, where Anderson Moreland had fallen to the white mob on July 11th. When a dramatic meeting of Monroe Blacks in late summer endorsed the People's Party, a forboding 'twist' of fortune occurred: T. T. Smith of Brent in Monroe sent the following account of that meeting in to the People's Party Paper--

. . . negroes of Monroe held mass meeting at Forsyth to determine course in present campaign, court house crowded. Enthusiasm and unanimity, resolved to support nat'l /sic/, state & county executive committee, are fully organized and enthused for the cause of the people. The negro cannot bear the name of democrat /sic/.²

This T. T. Smith report of the Monroe meeting was especially ominous as it was published throughout Georgia just one month after Moreland's slaying. And while there is no record of the meeting written from the Black perspective, to confirm or deny the impression Smith gave, the report is nonetheless an example of the reckless misuse which could be made of the Watson-articulated Populist principle of uniting Southern Black and whites on a platform of common self-interest. For even if the People's Party Paper staff were not abreast of the fact that

1

People's Party Paper, 22 July 1892.

2

People's Party Paper, 10 August 1892.

at the same town where this meeting occurred, a Black man had been murdered the month before by a white mob, it seems 'common sense' thinking would have told them not to conclude the Monroe announcement as they did. But, as said, opportunism would prove to be a deep current of this political revolution in Georgia--and the Monroe announcement would be but one evidence of the fact. In the Monroe case, however, such white Populists' self-interest in Blacks (i.e. instead, for example, of an unselfish interest in them) worked particular devastation, as it apparently unleashed white death squad terror and brutality upon Blacks in that county.

But the fact of the Monroe Blacks having nevertheless dared meet at the Forsyth courthouse in the wake of the Moreland lynching indicates not only that there was some Populist party strength in Monroe, but also that a considerable number of Blacks of that adjoining county had the determination to walk the Populist path no matter what it would cost them. And, as will be seen, they were determined even to meet violence with violence.

In Pike, on the other hand, Black involvement in the Populist party would take a less radical expression than the massive, reckless commitment that party apparently got from Monroe Blacks; but white mob savagery would nonetheless also follow close behind the march of Black Populism in Pike.

Pike county Blacks in this time of much inter-county communication probably knew of the June lynching in Monroe. (--The word of that lynching traveled far enough to reach the N.A.A.C.P. statistics' book.) Yet a convention of Pike Blacks entered upon their dangerous third party course at Zebulon at about the time the People's Party Paper's foreboding pronouncement on the Monroe Blacks was circulating through Georgia. But

while the Watson paper did announce the occurrence of the Zebulon Populist primary and a "grand rally of People's Party" at Zebulon a day or so after the Pike Black meeting occurred there, the Pike Blacks had the good fortune to be overlooked by the People's Party Paper. Instead the Pike County Journal on August 19th announced thus this dangerous move by the convention of Pike Blacks:

The negroes of this county met in convention here last Saturday and after spending much breath in the discussion of imaginary issues passed resolutions endorsing the third party. The more conservative and sensible element were opposed to this course and went away greatly dissatisfied with the meeting. One of the Cowan¹ negroes from the western portion of the county, who it is said has been liberally 'sugared', led the fight for fusion with the third party. He claims that the election of the third party in this county would be a partial victory for the negro. He regards the third party as the closest darling relative of the Republican party, and to use his own words, 'Its success is half the battle won for the Republicans.'²

Pointing angrily to the white mentorship of this meeting, the Pike Journal furthermore railed "One of the third party devotees was on hand to see if instructions were carried out."³ The paper concluded, "We pity the party that panders only to the lowest prejudices of the white and hobnobs with the colored people whom they propose to use as a cat's paw."⁴

1

The name was interchangeably spelled "Cowan" and "Cowings" in the Journal, but the Pike County Tax Digests 1890-1896 spelled it "Cowings" for the most part.

2

P. Journal, 19 August 1892.

3

Ibid.

4

Ibid.

Hence, by this Journal introduction, Cowings, the name of a family which would become synonymous with Black Populism in Pike County in the 1890's, became a focus of the turbulent politics of the day. Little is known, however, of the Cowings family, but tax digest figures showed that at the beginning of the era (in 1892) at least eight Cowings, apparently relatives, lived at the Pike town of Molena. And although only one of the family consistently owned land, a sizeable rural lot of 105 acres valued at \$475, by 1893 the Cowings were taxed for a proprietorship (on that lot) listed under the name of "J. C. Cowings and Brothers."¹ Other evidence will also show that they were a family of "pacesetters" in this era of overwhelming poverty.

It should also be noted that the Journal ploy of focusing primarily on the leader of the Pike Populist, Cowings, would tend to isolate Cowings and would almost cost one particularly outspoken Cowings his life. Journal editor Lee's approach to the Black protest also foreshadowed the role Pike area Black Populists would apparently have at least one white Populist mass meeting in the area. It was a role which would be typical for Blacks, with some notable exceptions, in the Southern Populist movement--namely, on the periphery at convention meetings.²

Although the appearance of Black Populists on the troubled Pike political scene preoccupied the Journal to a degree, by Cowings' pro-Republican fusion statement it can be seen that Black Republicans still survived

1

Pike County, Georgia, Tax Digest (1891-1896), n.p.

2

Saunders, "Populists and The Negro," 242.

in Pike. And before the October election the Journal launched an anti-McKinley tariff series "How protection robs us." It is thought the Journal's effort may have been directed at discouraging the Cowing-styled Republican-Populist gambit. In keeping with this perspective, the Pike newspaper would even go so far as to indicate support for an Atlanta Black Republican leader's effort in Monroe to push Governor Northen's anti-lynching record (as would the Griffin News editor push that effort in Spalding)--so strange would the alliances of the turbulent 1892 campaign be. And the Journal immediately after the Cowings meeting pounced on the strange alliance of the pro-Black Populists and their 'slavery bill' gubernatorial candidate Peek. Publishing the bill in full, the Pike newspaper declared, "Peek's Infamous Slavery Bill Arises Like Banquo's Ghost."¹

On the other hand, the Journal had little or nothing to say about the third party primary at Zebulon. And whereas in succeeding years the People's Party Paper would advertise the fact that the Pike Populist primary invited Black participation, no such notice apparently was made in 1892. And it is not clear whether Blacks participated in that first interracial primary deep in what was apparently solid white Democratic primary territory. But on the very day of the Pike Populist primary, the Griffin News ran a story, the ~~inuendo~~ ^{nuendo} of which was clear in the headlines: "Negroes and Whites Held a Meeting and Formed a Plot to Force White Residents to Leave Town at Once."² According to the News' New Orleans piece

1

P. Journal, 26 August 1892.

2

Griffin News, 10 August 1892.

on "political enmity," presented to this Democratic merchant town and section, Blacks and whites (in sympathy with those who attacked and shot a judge whose policies were unpopular) held a meeting to force a number of whites to leave by threatening, for example, to burn down stores.¹

The battle of 1892 was also heating up through the state. Shortly before Tom Watson's arrival in the state about the time of the Zebulon Populist primary, the mob at Quitman had attacked state Populist chairman C. C. Post and the gubernatorial candidate Peek with rocks. When Watson arrived in Georgia, Post left the state. But the Populist 'apostle' was greeted by thousands of Populists who met his train. After a two and a half hour speech referring to his colored friends and calling for the color line to be wiped out and every man to be on his citizenship regardless of color, the nerve-wracked, exhausted Populist leader suffered a violent vomiting attack.²

Concerning such news of Watson, the Pike Journal and the Griffin News apparently would have kept the Pike area Blacks on the periphery; but while these newspapers omitted reporting on such occurrences, it is likely that some Pike area Blacks, through their contacts with white Populists or through the Atlanta newspapers and the People's Party Paper, were probably aware of the violence surrounding the incendiary Populist movement in Georgia. And they might have seen the great tide of violence sweeping the state as an ominous sign of a great change

1

Ibid.

2

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 231; People's Party Paper, 12 August, 1892.

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1
Ibid.

2
Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 231; People's Party Paper, 12 August, 1892.

coming. Certainly they had to have had deep feelings about the dark new movings of the white death squads through the land. Despite all the terrors this generation of Blacks--and whites--had lived through, surely this wave of darkness must have been horrifying, coming as it did after Blacks had struggled and endured so much to put slavery behind them. But it is not known just how these middle Georgia Blacks really felt as the month of August, which had seen their courageous declarations for the revolutionary Populist party, closed with a white mob attack on a Monroe Black named John Jessy. Jessy was slaughtered by the white lynch mob on August 30th near Forsyth, for alleged rape.¹

Apparently right after Jessy's assassination, Atlanta Black lawyer William Pledger was dispatched to Monroe. The Journal's special from Monroe declared that Blacks and Republicans held a mass meeting with about two hundred present from mostly two of the county's districts and two brass bands were on hand. And although the Pike Journal did not say whether Pledger had been sent by Governor Northen or whether Pledger came because of the lynching, the Journal did note, "Hon William Pledger of Atlanta" denounced the third party as mostly "the same discontented crowd that has been mobbing and lynching the colored people in the South ever since the war."² Also the Democratic Journal apparently relished Pledger's charge that Democrats had never trusted the "discontented crowd" (Populists) with office and hence the Populists had pulled out to themselves and were begging

¹
N.A.A.C.P., Thirty Years of Lynching, p. 57.

²
P. Journal, 9 September 1892.

the Negroes to put them in.¹ Pledger furthermore urged the Blacks to vote for Livingston and Northen, as the Republicans had no candidates in the field. "Don't touch Peek," he warned, "for he tried once and will try again to put the slavery bill on you."²

In view of Pledger's bold, Journal-supported declaration it would seem that he could not have sincerely felt that the Populist were the lynchers in Monroe--or would he have brought further slaughter upon those Blacks by uttering such dangerous words? And although the Journal did not detail the Monroe Blacks' response, it is clear that Pledger's junket through the Pike area was not a triumph for the Black Republican. For he met his test at Griffin shortly after the Monroe effort.

At the time of Pledger's swing into Griffin in mid-September, the News declared that the Spalding Blacks were "much more split up than the whites," and that the Blacks had held several meetings "to decide upon some plan of action" on the October election, but were still radically divided on an endorsement in the Peek-Northen contest.³

William Pledger's visit would stir the undecided leadership of the Spalding Blacks to near frenzy. The Griffin News reported the local event with considerably liberal overtones (--although this apparent eye-witness report left out whatever might have been said in behalf of the Populists and the Republicans):

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Griffin News, 18 September 1892.

. . . There was a large crowd of/Blacks/ from different parts of the county at the court house yesterday. They were called to order by Epps Blanton, who is chairman of the county executive committee, who announced that the object of the meeting was to fill vacancies in the committee. This was accomplished with some trouble and then speech making was in order. It was evident that nobody would be allowed to speak who was not thoroughly in accord with the chairman. Epps Blanton and Luke Evans and one or two others transacted all the business of the meeting and had the majority of the crowd with them at all points. Several speeches were made, all extolling Republicanism and advocating Third partyism as the next thing to it, the principal speaker being L. S. Ingram, the colored editor of the People's Advocate, of Atlanta. After this had been going on for over two hours the other faction got tired and demanded that Ingram cease some time. The chairman tried to quell the rising disturbance, but seeing that he would not be able to do so a motion to adjourn was carried amid great confusion. A majority of the crowd left the room, and amid the confusion, W. A. Pledger took the stand and commenced an impassioned speech in a loud tone. He advocated Northen as against Peek and denounced the coalition between the negroes and the Populist /sic/, declaring that the last speaker had been brought up. He (Pledger) was a delegate to Minneapolis, was a trusted leader in the national Republican party, but believed in voting for the best man when the Republicans had no ticket. He made a good speech, which was listened to and applauded by about a third of those who had assembled.¹

William Pledger was beaten up by local Black politicians as he tried to leave Griffin after the meeting. Pledger's (mulatto) color, his educated, 'abundant' self-confidence might have vexed these Griffin Blacks. They might have been irritated by this liberated outsider's freedom of expression. They might have been bothered by the long, crowded meeting in the full exposure of whites. Attributing to the problem might have been too violent political loyalties, liquor, the pressures of the cotton depression, or the pressures imposed on them by Spalding whites because of the Blacks' superior numbers in that county. Or it might have been that the frustrated Blacks, having in their recent memory the previous

1

Ibid.

decade of dramatic independent political roles for Spalding Blacks, felt their vote for the Democrats would not secure any concessions for them from local Democrats--as the Blacks were so dependent economically upon the Democratic merchants and landowners. Hence, these Pike area Blacks might have felt resentment against Pledger, an outsider close enough to Northen to get concessions for his efforts--and therefore willing to hinder their chances to by some amazing turn of fortune come into power with this new party in Spalding county, Georgia and the nation.

Whatever the reasons for the attack thus detailed by the News, this event gives further evidence of the violence and strife permeating daily life in the Populist period:

Yesterday afternoon when Bill Pledger was getting on the train to go to Atlanta he was assaulted by several other men of his race and color, who struck him, pulled him away from the train and otherwise maltreated him. Bill was left here until this morning. Warrants were sworn out for John Blanton, Tink Nunnally and Sam Miller. About an hour later Bill Pledger knocked Epps Blanton in the head and being aided by the darkness made his escape. Epps Blanton is a local politician of the colored Republican persuasion, who together with the others mentioned became offended at an utterance of Bill's in his speech yesterday, and was with the crowd during the attack. Last night the streets were full of people and excitement, while the three above mentioned walked the streets for hours clamoring for Bill's blood and creating a general and riotous disturbance. They were, however, after they had disgusted all decent people with their behavior, ordered home. The entire proceeding was disgraceful in the extreme and should have been nipped in the bud.¹

Pledger's response and the beating forms a remarkable parallel account to Tom Watson's responses and frequently violent encounters during the post-Reconstruction era. Had Pledger and Watson had a different type

1

Ibid.

of moral strength to withstand persecution and violence and had they been able to embrace fusion--as was done in North Carolina and was suggested by Pike's Cowings at the Pike Blacks' Third party meeting--Populism, farm prosperity, and Black civil rights might have taken a completely different turn. But as it were both the Black Republicans and the Populists would be defeated by the violence and corruption of campaigns and elections of the tumultuous Nineties.

Although Tom Watson refused Republican fusion, the Black vote was clearly the focus of the 1892 election, and Watson and the Democrats vied openly for it, with violence mounting as election day approached. A Columbus Black stumping for a white Democrat was in Wilkes county, for example, saved from being shot by white Populists through the intervention of an armed Democratic band.¹ Watson used Camden county ex-legislator Anthony Wilson (a Black whose recent seating in the Georgia Assembly Watson had opposed) to stump with him throughout his strife-torn district, where the social equality issue raged. With Wilson, Watson weaved in and out of controversial, incendiary proclamations to both Blacks and whites. To Blacks he defended his vote against the Negro school appropriation by saying it would have meant more taxes for the people already burdened with building a new state capitol. His stand against building branch colleges for Blacks was defended with Watson's assertion that he wished common schools for all the state's Blacks instead of colleges for a few.²

¹ Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Reddick, "Negro in the Populist Movement," p. 50.

² Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Reddick, "Negro in the Populist Movement," p. 52.

The campaign in Pike had also produced a heated racial issue by September. Barnesville's Gazette charged Populist party hopeful Thomas Barrett had intimated, "Give me plenty of money and I don't care /about/ force bills and negro supremacy."¹ In an uproar, Barrett's sons had demanded that the Gazette retract the defaming accusation; but the controversy was set to escalate and explode into a court of law. By 1894 the Atlanta Journal and the Constitution would publish the Barrett 'disgrace' throughout Georgia.

During the violent, bitter campaigns of the period, Democrats in the state recoiled before 'radical' Populist efforts for the Black vote; and some numbers of whites forsook Populist ambitions because of the 'odious' 'nigger in the woodpile.' But while Democratic reports would claim particularly the violent 1894 campaign in the state involved Populists seeking Blacks' pledges of support through 'odious' methods as house-to-house canvasses--with Populists sitting up at night in Blacks' homes on terms of equality--it would appear 'outrageous' social equality methods were already being used by whites with Pike Black voters in 1892.³ And the following innuendo in the Journal's revealing account of Pike 1892 campaign methods pointed to what may have been unusual for Georgia: namely, that Pike Democrats also "hobnobbed" after dark with Blacks in the 1890's--

1

P. Journal, 16 September 1892.

2

Ibid.

3

Saunders, "Populists and the Negro," 245.

What has gotten into politics in Georgia and especially that of glorious old Pike that contaminates one's sense of respect that will occasion white heroes to the manor born to silently and under cover of darkness hold political pow-wows with negroes, the ultimate result of which, if successful will be to invite their own political and social annihilation. Men are daily guilty of this revolting and contemptible practice, and had they been foretold of it five years ago would have resented it in a most decided and vigorous manner. The political sentiments that has /sic/ brought about this change of sentiment and feeling must have been adulterated with all the beguiling allurements that hell itself can induce, for it seems impossible to conceive of anything ordinary accomplishing the disaster that now seems to an extent imminent /sic/ among co-equal sufferers, whose common heritage has been a third of a century's oppression and whose feelings and sentiments should have been made sacred by baptism of fraternal blood.¹

It was not "under cover of darkness" however that Third party Blacks and whites assembled together at Griffin a few days after Pledger's visit. Something extraordinary indeed brought them together. Cyclone Davis, the "wandering Texas doctrinaire" and author of the Third party Pension plank spoke at the Griffin court house. After the appearance of News publicity sufficiently slanderous to advertise his advent, Davis appeared and "blew his spellbinding breath. . . ." ² The News had said "his wits are those of the demagogue and can have no influence here. . . ." ³ Spalding's overall nonsupportive attitude toward Populism was, however, not an obstacle to the Davis meeting, as Populists from surrounding counties, including Pike, were called in to hear Davis. Also in attendance,

¹
P. Journal, 30 September 1892.

²
Griffin News, 21 September 1892.

³
Griffin News, 20 September 1892.

according to the News, were a few scattered "honest Democratic yoemen of Spalding county together with some perhaps not so honest in their political expression."¹ Press representatives from the Atlanta Constitution and the Pomona Picayune were also at the meeting.

Among the local Third party dignitaries in attendance was Pike's Tom Barrett. And crossing the lines into this dangerous unknown turf was "a colored contingent of the Third Partyites" in "slim attendance."² It was not clear, however, whether the Griffin meeting followed the Populist pattern of insisting upon segregation of the races at such meetings.³

Much is left unsaid in the News about this meeting, but apparently something happened at the Davis meeting to adversely affect the Third party's fortunes with Blacks. Along with the indication that trouble makers were present, the News said only that " . . . Except for the slim attendance of the colored contingent of the Third Partyites, it was more like a circus day than anything Griffin has seen for a long time."⁴ Yet by the time of the next big Populist gathering at Griffin, a fortnight after Davis' meeting, the indecision evidenced by the Spalding Blacks three days before the Davis visit (at the Pledger meeting) had crystallized into definite anti-Third Party sentiment. The meeting after Davis'

1

Griffin News, 21 September 1892.

2

Ibid.

3

Crowe, "Watson, Populists and Blacks," 109.

4

Griffin News, 21 September 1892.

was with H. Liloucks, president of the National Farmer's Alliance and Industrial Union and with a South Dakota member of the National Farmer's Alliance and People's Party. According to the News, only about fifty white men and boys could be cornered for the exposition of Third party principles. Not a single Black could be persuaded to come.¹

Contributing to the circus-like atmosphere of the Davis meeting was probably the somber mood sinking in the Pike area as it became evident about this time that the deep depression was going a step deeper. For with foreclosures everywhere and cotton at its lowest point in a third of a century, the Pike farmers were beginning to face dark despair: the rains had destroyed the cotton! The late corn was lost! (The pea crop was the best in ten years and the hay looked promising.)² Also affecting the atmosphere of the meeting was probably the fact of Black John Jessy's Monroe lynching the month before, and the fact that a fortnight before the Jessy brutality, Pike's sheriff had been accidentally shot by one of his posse tracking a Black who murdered his own brother.³

As the turbulent campaign neared the climax, the Democrats raged against the Populists. A sworn affidavit declared Governor Northen had said, "Watson ought to be killed and that it ought to have been done a long ago."⁴ The state Populist chairman declared: "Vehement rage prevails

1.
Griffin News, 2 October 1892.

2
P. Journal, 7 October 1892.

3
P. Journal, 15 August 1892.

4
Affadavit of Mrs. Arrenia Hall, quoted in Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 239.

wherever People's Party speakers obtain a hearing . . . The times are ominous. They resemble the days that preceded secession and civil war. There will be bloodshed and death unless there is a change." He concluded that "It is generally believed that plans are being perfected to defraud the People's Party of its vote."¹ According to a New York Tribune report in the People's Party Paper, \$40,000 was sent by Northern capitalist interests to defeat Watson in Augusta.² In the election of 1892 Reconstruction methods were revived--corruption, terror tactics, fraud prevailed. The Democrats justified any means to achieve the preservation of the 'sacred' solid Democratic South. Though Populists employed similar tactics, but to a lesser degree, they were not as effective in their corrupt methods as the Democrats.³

The 1892 election and campaign in Georgia furthermore left several whites and some fifteen Blacks dead in its wake.

During these turbulent days in Pike it was not clear whether corrupt methods were used at the polls or whether the test of the Pike area Populists in an open meeting of both races, the Davis meeting, had just failed; but at the election two weeks after the Texan's visit to the area--where Spalding Blacks had been so undecided and Pike's and Monroe's so enthused for the Populists beforehand--the Democrats carried Pike, Monroe, and Spalding by large majorities. Spalding's majority was "the largest by

1

People's Party Paper, quoted in Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 235.

2

New York Tribune, quoted in People's Party Paper, 30 December 1892.

3

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 155.

far that she has ever given the Democratic ticket."¹ The size of the Democratic majorities prompted the News to declare:

. . . The alliance was broken, half the Republican strength captured and the mongrel Third party driven fairly off the field at nearly every point.²

The Griffin News furthermore echoed the exultant glee which overflowed in the Democratic press throughout Georgia. The News election dispatch headline declared,

70,000! /Democratic Majority/--It's All of That and May Be More!--Georgia Speaks in Thunder Tones--Poor Little Peek-a-Boo, We See You Hiding There--Just Under The Edge Of The Avalanche--But the Third Party is Away Out of Sight. . . .³

In the Tenth district Tom Watson was defeated in a vile, corrupt election in which the Augusta vote was about double the number of registered voters in the city. Watson contested the election and his district was subsequently ruthlessly gerrymandered to hand him another defeat.

As the dust settled on the bitter Democratic victory in Georgia, it became evident that Blacks had voted in record numbers--probably more than at any time since Reconstruction.⁴ It would prove an ominous turn of events for Georgia Blacks. For 1892 signaled the beginning of a move

¹
Griffin News, 8 October 1892.

²
Griffin News, 7 October 1892.

³
Griffin News, 6 October 1892.

⁴
Wilhoit, "Populism's Impact," 118.

to disfranchise and viciously segregate Blacks throughout the state.

In the Bourbon's fraudulent misuse of the Black vote one historian saw a national disgrace which marked in 1892 the "beginning of the end of Georgia Populism as a viable reform movement."¹ Also in Pike county, 1892 marked a climactic turning point in the Populist era. After 1892, political processes in Pike would be turned into a travesty; Pike Black Populist leadership would be purged by violent white reaction; and orderly, segregated political rallies would be replaced by wholesale liquor debauching of the Black vote, ballot box stuffing, and bloodshed at the polls.

Shortly after the foreboding election of 1892, Tom Watson sheltered on his Thomson farm the Black Populist leader, Rev. W. H. Doyle, whom white gangs threatened with lynching. In 1892 Doyle made sixty-three speeches in Watson's campaign,² but it was this post-election incident which would become a lasting symbol of the tumultuous Populist 1890's effort to unite the races in the South.

Despite Pike Journal editor Parry Lee's liberal proclivities, it should be noted that the memorable Doyle incident was portrayed with particular Democratic venom in that newspaper. A Journal editorial declared in late October:

Watson, who represents the frazzled bob-tail of the third party in Georgia, and who is a candidate from the 10th district for a seat in Congress . . . Knowing his doom was sealed . . . has pretended that he is in imminent danger of being shot down by Democratic outlaws . . . he has had his house guarded by more than 100 armed men, who pretend to be expecting attack

1

Ibid., 118-19.

2

Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. 96.

every minute.¹

Also according to the Journal, the mayor of town assured Watson

that no violence would be done, and even agreed to furnish policemen if he was determined to have guards. Watson insolently refused this offer, and guarded by men armed to the teeth he marches to the court house and delivers incendiary /sic/ speech and then goes home in company with a negro friend guarded as usual by this crazy bloodthirsty gang of henchmen who consider it an honor to touch the hem of his garment.²

The Journal concluded:

If Watson does not incite insurrection and revolution it is not because he has not been unscrupulous and persistent in his effort to do so . . . He is grovelling in the slime of his own infancy and his insult to southern manhood will not be rebuked by shot guns, but by honest ballots.³

Also a week after the fateful election came the extraordinary disclosure of another revolt smoldering in Pike county.--Through their attorney W. E. Lofton, some Black teachers of the county--notably A. L. Cowings and F. M. Cowings--had filed an action against the county school commissioner Edward Elder.⁴ The Blacks' legal action involved a petition termed a "prayer" by the Black teachers--filed in behalf of "Willis, Cowings, et al". It is not clear how many Black teachers were involved, and it is not certain whether their suit was filed merely before the county board of education--and eventually the state board--or before a

1

P. Journal, 28 October 1892.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

4

P. Journal, 14 October 1892.

court of law as well. But clearly the words of the incredible petition prayer were careful, studied expressions of determination. And clearly, in this the Pike Black teachers' prayer, printed in the Journal as 'The negroes' Side', there is indication of the vicissitudes faced by Black Southern public school teachers who tried to serve humanity in a bigoted society which paid them the wages of poverty:

To the Public School Board of Georgia - Pike County:

Your humble petitioners hereto undersigned, all public school teachers of said county, doth /sic/ humbly and respectfully represent that they have been greatly injured and damaged by the county commissioner Edward Elder, of said county by reason of flagrant discriminations in compelling teachers holding the same grade of license and teaching a larger averaged school, to teach for a smaller salary than other teachers teaching a school of the same grade and for the same length of term.

For disbursing the school fund inequitably and not proportionately as the law presumes regarding the grades and attainments of teachers, the grade of the school taught and the length of terms, but making the discriminations aforesaid on account of color.

In that the commissioner did employ, order, and otherwise induce teachers, your petitioners, to commence teaching the first of January 1892, and other times when he did not have the proper blanks for contracting but promised assured said teachers that it would be all right with them, that they would be paid off as last year by prorata per capita, and when they had carried their school on for a length of time said commissioner required them under pain of losing what they had already done, to sign an inferior, iniquitous and unjust and otherwise shameful contract. Said teachers protested the signing of said contracts on the ground that they were too unreasonable and unfair. Said contracts would require a first grade teacher to make an average of 50 pupils and teach for \$30 a month--paying his assistant out of said sum. A Second grade teacher received the same salary as a first grade teacher and had to do the same amount of work. A third grade teacher had to do the same amount and kind of service as a first grade teacher, but got \$20 a month paying his assistance out of said sum and the year previous to this they received twice the compensation for the same service. Said commissioner pays a first grade white teacher \$60 per month to do the same grade of service. Said commissioner having promised to remedy this, said teachers signed said contracts. Said commissioner did add some of said

contracts \$2 per capita for all pupils above the average of 50 pupils.

The promises considered petitioners pray that they be paid off according to their average per capita as last year according to their original agreement, or that they be allowed the same salary according to their grade and service as white teachers doing the same class of work.¹

Alongside this incredible petition in the Journal was school commissioner Elder's response along with the ruling of the county board of education in the matter. To the teachers' dramatic charge of flagrant racism on his part, Elder declared, "The allegation . . . is untrue and cannot be maintained."² Elder also noted that Pike's Black teachers' salaries compared favorably with Black teachers' salaries in adjoining counties and exceeded the salaries paid Monroe's Black teachers.

Elder's allegation about the adjoining counties could not be verified for the school year 1892, as the state school commissioner's annual report did not include statistics of teachers' salaries in that year. And in 1895, when salaries were included in the State report, Pike's figures were not recorded. But by 1896 the following average monthly salaries were given in the state's annual report for Pike and adjoining counties.

Clearly Pike fell far behind all adjoining counties in the salaries paid both her Black and her white teachers in 1896--although that need not have been the case in 1892. And clearly all these Pike area counties paid Black teachers considerably less than what they paid whites. But

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

AVERAGE MONTHLY SALARY PAID TEACHERS IN 1896¹

County	First Grade		Second Grade		Third Grade	
	White	Colored	White	Colored	White	Colored
Pike	\$30.12	\$19.50	\$18.61	\$17.01	\$	\$ 8.09
Meriwether	40.00	30.00	30.00	20.00	20.00	15.00
Monroe	40.00	25.00	30.00	20.00		18.00
Spalding	40.00	25.00	25.00	20.00	18.00	15.00
Upson	40.00	30.00	30.00	25.00	20.00	16.00

in addition to justifying Pike Black teachers' pay by comparing Pike to adjoining counties in this regard, Elder stood on a favorite position of the day: that the only inequity in the Pike school system was against whites, who paid so much more than Blacks into the school fund. According to Elder, in 1891 Blacks had paid about 5 percent of the Public School Fund and yet had received for the operation of their schools about 40 percent of the entire amount of the Fund.² Apart from Elder's subscription to the popular, angry, mistaken white notion of Blacks contribution to the Georgia school fund, it should be noted that Blacks' share in Pike's 1896 school fund was not nearly 40 percent, but was significantly less than 31 percent.³

¹ Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner for 1896, n.p.

² P. Journal, 14 October 1892.

³ Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner for 1896, n.p.

But aside from county comparisons and such school fund percentage arguments, Elder defended himself against the Blacks' charges by quoting a January 1892 Pike board of education resolution for which he said "ample provision . . . is made under Section 28 of the common school laws of the State of Georgia."¹ According to this local resolution, the county school commissioner was "empowered to contract with teachers for salary or stipulated sums what ever, /sic/ in his judgement, the best interest of the public school /sic/ will be served."²

Elder noted that under this January Pike resolution--apparently passed about the time the "liberal appropriations" were given the county--a salary plan was adopted "with wise and conservative limitations and conditions, which both stimulated an active interest on the part of teachers to influence large attendance of pupils, and likewise to protect the Public School Fund from disbursement without adequate service on the part of the teacher. . . ."³ And whereas before the 1892 local resolution, Pike teachers had been paid pro-rata upon the average attendance in their school, under the resolution teachers' compensation was "adjusted" according to

The attainments (regardless of grade of license), administrative capacity, experience, faithfulness and market value of teachers, the comparative importance and grade of school taught, the peculiar difficulties and embarrassments /sic/ that surround certain schools at certain periods in their history, the inability of communities to sustain schools without discriminating liberality, and finally considerations

¹
P. Journal, 14 October 1892.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid.

of public policy, so vitally connected with the success, expansion and permanency of the Public School system. . . .¹

But however these adjustments may have been applied in Elder's salary allotments, the end result in Pike county was not only that whites were paid more than Blacks but that in the highest paid teaching level, first grade, whites in 1896 greatly outnumbered Blacks in Pike and in all adjoining counties, as the following statistics showed:

GRADES OF TEACHERS IN 1896²

County	First Grade		Second Grade		Third Grade	
	White	Colored	White	Colored	White	Colored
Pike	32	5	8	20		10
Meriwether	47	4	15	7	3	23
Monroe	30	8	20	12		30
Spalding	15	1	2	3	3	13
Upson	18	3	7	5	13	19

Hence, it can be seen that the white teachers had the most to gain by the Pike January resolution to pay first grade teachers more than others. Also these statistics and the state school commissioner's response to the Pike Black teacher actions suggested that the grade level of the white pupils especially was not adhered to by white teachers filing their statistics on their one-room schools. And whereas some distinctions

¹
Ibid.

²
Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner for 1896, n.p.

in teachers' qualifications existed in Pike in 1896--in that the county's five normal school-trained public teachers were all white, there had been no normal-trained teachers in the Pike system in 1895.¹

In addition to Elder's thus detailed legalistic response to the Black teachers' protest, the Pike school commissioner uncovered to the public his provocative view of conflicts he had had with the Black complainants--notably, the Cowings'. Elder's account not only suggested the extent of Black political involvement in Pike during the era, but it also gave evidence of a spirit of revolt among the county's Black teachers (i.e. F. W. Cowings' gesture at the Inter-county institute). And it also thus suggested a broader legal sphere to the revolt spearheaded by the Black Populist vanguard Cowings family through the public schools:

The bill charges that there are instances wherein teachers of the second grade license receive the same compensation as some other teacher holding first grade. This is true in the case of the school at Midway, taught by A.L. Cowings, a teacher of the second grade.

There were some circumstances touching this case to which I invite attention to illustrate the principle involved in the administration of the salary plan. During the year 1891, a teacher taught at this school and created two factions among the patrons because of the prominent part the teacher took in a heated political campaign, and as his patrons embraced adherents to both sides in the political contest, division and dissention /sic/ in the school resulted, thereby, and the teacher was forced to retire, leaving the school in confusion and discord. A. L. Cowings applied for the position of principal of this school, and believing that he possessed sufficient capacity, tact and discretion to restore harmony and also render faithful service, I agreed to pay him \$150 provided the school roll would show the required average attendance.

In another instance, I employed F. M. Cowings, a teacher holding first grade license, whom I regarded as possessing unusual scholarship for a colored teacher even of his grade,

¹

Georgia, Report of the State School Commissioner for 1895, n.p.

but there were no peculiar circumstances surrounding this school. I contracted with him for a salary of \$150 subjected to invariable conditions as to attendance--same compensation as mentioned in the first case. Under the administration of these two teachers, their schools have prospered and in the first instance dissensions /sic/ healed.

I confess, however in this connection that my judgment as to the discretion and wisdom of these two teachers, was in error--the former by reason of his active and public participation in party politics, thus sowing in the same school the seeds of discord and dissension /sic/ which is the inevitable result of such unprofessional conduct. The latter manifesting a total lack of discretion and professional character by outraging the proprieties of the closing exercises of our Inter-county Institute, by downright discourtesy to the lecturer and presiding officer, impoliteness to his colleagues and expressed reflections upon the official conduct of the Board of Education and the County School Commissioner.¹

Hence, the name Cowings, so prominent in the county's Black Populist action in Pike in August, received more notoriety a week after the fateful 1892 election, as the Black teachers' independent action and revolt--like the August Black effort--was put down by whites.--The local board of education ruled that although at one time Pike teachers of all grade levels were paid the same amounts, the county school commissioner could have in 1892 "gone into the open market and hired teachers for every school in the county, paying different prices for each one without violating any law."² The state school commissioner S. D. Bradwell upheld the local board's denial of the Blacks' petition. In a disjointed response printed in the Pike Journal Bradwell declared,

Board /sic/ have no power to distribute mony /sic/ to the subdistricts . . . but the only way money can be paid out of the

1

P. Journal, 14 October 1892.

2

Ibid.

school fund is by employing teachers . . . Contracts are binding on both parties and cannot be set aside except fraud or duress /sic/. The written contract is of higher power than the verbal one. . . . If the parties were dissatisfied with the contracts they should have refused to sign them. This was their remedy.

This is not a question of policy as to whether the board ought to have raised the number of /Pike white/ students to such a high average /i.e. from first grade status to second and third grade status/. It is not a question as to whether the salary is too small or not. Of these matters the law makes the board the judge. . . . The /Pike/ board under its own ruling can supplement the amount in the conditional terms named in the contract and they are authorized to add thereto if in their judgement the funds warrant it.

Thus in an arbitrary manner were the fate and fortune of Pike's Black public school teachers handled. Yet in this county which spent large amounts on private white education, these Blacks had made their stand against oppression. And because there was just "spotty" evidence of Southern Black teachers taking anything resembling such a direct, self jeopardizing stand against biased public school white administrations, it might reasonably be assumed that these Pike Blacks had independently made a courageous--and revolutionary--move. And clearly the spirit behind their move had grown out of the Populist movement in Pike county.

But their move would apparently have far reaching repercussions for Black (and white) public education in Pike--and for the ill-fated Cowings family--as the severe depression of the Nineties worsened in 1893, another natural disaster felled the county, and many Pike whites succumbed to a dark, violent mood towards Blacks.

CHAPTER VII

DESPERATE TIMES AND WHITE REACTION: THE RULE OF VIOLENCE 1893

In the new year, 1893, a devastating financial panic struck across the nation. Hundreds of banks began closing their doors. Hundreds of millions of dollars of mercantile losses were recorded. Prices reached the lowest point of the century--with farm prices at a disastrous point. Cotton's price plummeted. Georgia land values went down sharply. Unemployment among factory workers skyrocketed.¹ The viscious lynching period continued unabated.

Grover Cleveland, the new president, bucked fervent demands for silver coinage to offset the currency "famine". By summer the crisis was most severe. Especially the debtor West and South were hard hit.²

A silent commentary to the somber times in Pike county were the columns of escapist literary vignettes which, with much international news, suddenly filled the pages of the Journal. But also the Pike newspaper published sermons and religious counsel in this year. The Griffin News, on the other hand, began the hard year with an outpouring of viscious murder and lynching tales.

By mid-January a devastating cold wave gripped the Southeast. Business came to a standstill in Griffin, as "the occupation of mankind was

1
Arnett, Populist Movement, pp. 156-158.

2
Ibid., 156-166.

to keep warm."¹ Snow blanketed the ground. At Chattanooga electric lights froze and burst.²

In the bitter cold and sleeting rain, a gruesome nightmare of torture was enacted at Paris, Texas, the banner Black Populist region. The Griffin News' headline declared, "Texas Torture--The Inhuman Torment Inflicted on a Guilty Wretch--It Beggars Description--and the Blood-Curdling Details Cause the Stoutest Heart to Turn with a Shudder."³ The News then thus unfolded to the people of this middle Georgia section the world-shocking savagery that was inflicted on a Texan Black:

As was anticipated in these dispatches, swift vengeance was visited upon the negro Henry Smith, whose crime was one of the worst in the whole category of offenses /apparently, the crime was the rape and subsequent death of a white child/

. . .

A bitter cold day the train with Smith arrived, sleeting rain; crowd of 10,000! gathered around depot . . . Smith denied for a long time having knowledge of the crime until the repeated statements of those with him and the frenzied crowds at each station passed, convinced him there was no hope. He made a full statement . . . begged that he might be hanged.

. . . On realizing at last the death that awaited him, he collapsed completely and when the train stopped had to be carried to the cotton float, where he was placed in a chair mounted on a box, securely bound there, and then hauled through the town and out to the place of death. The officers made a show of resistance to the crowd, but it was no use. Thousands followed and hundreds more stood on the streets and watched him pass. He was a piteous sight, his face contorted . . . with the agony of thought . . .

On a stretch of prairie out of the city the scaffold had been built . . . He was brought and securely bound. His

1

Griffin News, 18 January 1893.

2

Ibid.

3

Griffin News, 4 February 1893.

clothing was stripped to the waist and he was turned over to the father of the dead child, who, with his son, aged fifteen and other relatives began the work of torture. A tinner's furnace was placed on the platform and with irons the executioners seared his body, beginning at his feet and working upward until not a piece of his body was untouched. His tongue was burned, his eyes put out, and every part of his body seared with fire.

He was then saturated with oil and the space beneath the scaffold filled with combustibles and all fired. As the flames swarmed around his body, which apparently hung lifeless in its bonds, it gave a convulsive shudder, the head rose from the breast, and a broken, quaking wail of agony rang out over the bleak plain.

Presently the bonds burned and the body toppled forward on the burning floor, where it writhed and twisted, then by a supreme effort, rose, grasped a railing and tore loose a remaining bond at the feet, sank, sitting on the edge of the platform, head and arms resting on the rail, legs dangling over the side; and then after a moments pause, slipped through the frame to the ground, was thrust in the crackling mass of fire below the scaffold, crawled out and was thrust back and covered up with flaming boards and timbers. . . .¹

The Democratic Governor of Texas, Plucky Hogg, decried this, said it was "shameful to humanity" despite the Black victim's "atrocious, barbarous crime, appalling and contemptible."² He pleaded for the Texas legislature to enact suitable laws and place them at his command so that "every person who takes part in a mob shall be brought to trial or the strength of the machinery of justice shall be thoroughly tested in the effort."³

These were awesome times.

Three people of Pike would kill themselves in this year.

1

Ibid.

2

Griffin News, 8 February 1893.

3

Griffin News, 8 February 1893.

Unto this dire scene came Dr. Young J. Allen of adjoining Meriwether county; Allen was returning after thirty-three years as a missionary in China. The Journal urged the people to hear Allen in a church meeting, as

Dr. Young J. Allen gave up fortune, home, domestic ease and a most promising future to become a herald of the cross in a distant and unknown land. He was 7 months on his first voyage. In the furious storms that sweep the oceans south of the Cape of Good Hope, shut down in a dark room for days nights, unable to stand on his feet, tossed from side to side by the lurchings of the vessel, his wife and 8 months old infant sharing this distress and peril, out of fresh water for weeks, he has no regrets nor repinings. Thrice he has girdled the world . . . He has come in contact with the best, the most cultivated, most distinguished men and officials of China and it is only when the great books are opened that the world will know the good he has done. . . .¹

Within days after Dr. Young's meeting, a killer roared out of Marion, Mississippi (leaving destruction and havoc there) and struck--with a freezing blizzard--at Pike county, Meriwether county, and Monroe. The cyclone!

The big end of the killer took the edge of Barnesville. Barnesville got the word to Griffin, "We had a terrible time of it here . . . every dwelling from old man Tom Riviere's to Midway church, a distance of two miles, was completely destroyed, and Andrew Riviere and two negroes were killed. Piedmont was almost completely destroyed."²

The mayor of Greenville in neighboring Meriwether issued an urgent plea to Griffin: "Many of our people are wrecked, homeless and penniless.

¹
P. Journal, 3 March 1893.

²
Griffin News, 5 March 1893.

Will Griffin aid in this hour of distress?"¹ The Journal, however, called attention to the suffering of the isolated mountain people and declared, "The appeals from Greenville and elsewhere should be responded to, but in remembering the unfortunates of the villages, let not the ear of humanity be deaf to cries of distress that arise from the suffering and dying of the mountains. . . ." ²

Molena, the Black Populist Cowings' town, was all but demolished.

Journal editor Lee was dispatched to the town. This was his report:

This county was visited at 8 o'clock last Friday night by one of the most terrible and devastating cyclones that has ever visited our state . . . The storm struck the town just above the depot with full force. Large trees were blown up by the roots and others twisted off as though they were broom straws. The pretty little town was ransacked and shaken to its foundations . . . The editor was on the scene last Sunday and was stricken with awe while gazing upon the wake of the terrible monster.

. . . John Melton's new frame house reduced to splinters, his wife injured fatally and her grandmother Mrs. Fefts killed outright. . . . Will Whaley suffered loss of house but none were seriously hurt . . . Drug store of Dr. Whitaker moved two feet and mashed up. . . . Dispensary building ditto. . . . Thorton house torn to kindling wood, but no one seriously hurt House of Jim Smith ruined. . . . Three story ginney belonging to Brooks Bros. including gins, fixtures, engines, planing mill, etc. mashed to smithereens. . . . Large new school building and masonic hall blown entirely away. Strange to say the piano in the music room suffered little or no damage, but that which was left of the organ could be tied up in the corner of a pocket handkerchief. . . . Few chimneys were left standing. . . . Speer's house was blown to pieces. He was injured badly by having an ear mashed off, an arm broken and internal injuries. He may die. His wife and children were also badly wounded. . . . John Leak, over 100 years old, had all houses torn to pieces. . . . W. T. Barker dwelling ruined and about eighteen tenant houses totally ruined. . . . Here

1

Griffin News, 7 March 1893.

2

P. Journal, 10 March 1893.

three negroes were killed, and several others may die. . . . Ace Peugh had houses torn to shreds. James Carriker, tenant house blown away. Henry Carriker suffers /sic/ loss of dwelling. . . . Doster sisters, house torn up and one of them badly hurt. . . . I. C. /sic/ Collier, store and goods destroyed and residence damaged. . . . Hawkins, house blown away, only daughter, Daisy, killed outright. . . . Whatley, house blown away and he was badly injured. . . .¹

Parry Lee grappled for words to convey the horror of what he saw.

"This summary," he said, "does not give any idea of the extent of the damage."²

Survivors met in Molena with Proressor J. N. Brooks as their chairman; relief for some forty-eight families had to be found. Their pitiful plea in the Journal was

Resolved, that any contribution in the way of clothing, bedding /sic/, furniture, provisions or mony /sic/ will be thankfully received /sic/, and they may be sent to the mayor and council . . . That we proceed to rebuild our academy at Molena.³

In all this devastation, it seems that only Blacks relied on their church. At nearby Greenville, where both the Black and white schools were destroyed, the Blacks went on Methodist Hill for their strength. And soon the Meriwether Vindicator would declare, "The colored people on Methodist Hill are going ahead in putting up another school house. They are ahead of whites in this respect."⁴ By August the Vindicator

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Ibid.

4
Meriwether Vindicator, quoted in Wall, "Blacks of Meriwether," p. 44.

would declare, "The colored Methodists have up a new building which is larger and more handsome than before. It is being used for school and church purposes."¹

In the wake of the devastation at Monroe, Forsyth's marshal was murdered trying to arrest a "desperate negro". The Negro, Nutting, was arrested, and according to the News, "Soon rumors were rife that a lynching would be held . . . The streets were thronged with excited men who spoke in undertones, but cooler heads, realizing the gravity of the situation took steps to prevent, if possible, the occurrence. . . ."² Governor Northen was telegraphed for the local military "to be in waiting." Ministers appealed to the crowds with good results, but by this time Blacks were gathering in the suburbs to attack the jail and liberate Nutting.³ Whites armed themselves. The Quitman guards were called up, and whites "quietly repaired to the armory of the Quitman guards." No Blacks could be seen anywhere, "which made the attack more probable."⁴ But Blacks apparently learned of the ambush and vacated Forsyth. And in the Griffin News nothing more was heard of these mean days in Monroe.

But by mid April the News detailed the horror along the Chattahoochee near Fort Gaines as the Black murderer of a local roadside store proprietor -- "one of the first young men of Quitman county . . . of an old aristocratic

¹ Ibid.

² Griffin News, 5 April 1893.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Griffin News, 15 April 1893.

family"--was burned alive on a rail pile.

The Black who confessed to killing the local young man in a robbery was "unknown in the community, being a low, black /sic/ young negro from parts unknown."¹ (It is not clear whether the young Fort Gaines victim may have been a mulatto.)

The News declared it the "most horrible affair in the history of Georgia." Blacks and whites had carried the confessed murderer to the scene of the crime, where Blacks did most of the labor in bringing fence rails for the fire, as

A fence was torn down and the rails piled around a fat lightwood stump and the prisoner tied and laid on top. Kerosene was poured lavishly over him and over the wood. The negro begged pitifully to be spared.

The crowd yelled with fury and delight. Some one stuck /sic/ a match to the wood and the flames shot up 20 feet into the air.

Amid the crackling of the flames and screams of the dying wretch, pistol shots rang out upon the air and the body of the writhing negro was perforated with pistol balls . . . men and women with long poles stood around, heaping up the chunks on the roasting flesh and gleefully assisting. . . .²

Griffin's religious revival a week after this savagery in Georgia no doubt had meaning for some. The News admonished, "Let the Indifferent Shake Off Their Lethargy Now, . . . There is a revival of religious sentiment going on at the Methodist Church which will soon permeate the entire community."³--It was a high hope in view of the somber spirit of the

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid.

³
Griffin News, 23 April 1893.

revival, for the Griffin paper said of the revival, "It has been this far attended by no excitement or characterized by any great evolution of feeling."¹ On the contrary, the News noted, "there is evinced a cautious, calm solemnity and consideration, which betokens to my mind a lasting and powerful reaction in due time from the lethargy which has pervaded our church circles."²

Hence, it would seem that the Church in the Pike area, in at least some measure, was faltering before the darkness. And, moreover, it was white church leaders who would help usher the people of Pike towards dark thoughts. In July, for example, Dr. J. J. Lafferty, editor of the Richmond Christian Advocate, the "leading Methodist publication of the south /sic/" was given his forum in the Pike County Journal. Race was the issue of the day, according to Lafferty's implications, and the Journal gave the following "stubborn facts" of his argument--noting they were "bound to cause a sensation coming from a religious paper:"³

'In a village of the cotton belt a big, burly black rode up to a store and said to the owner: 'Let this man (pointing to a poor white laborer) have \$2 worth of goods and charge it to me.' This transaction may fret the reader, but it has a wide significance.⁴

Invoking images of the Lost Cause, Lafferty continued,

1
Ibid.

2
Ibid.

3
Richmond Christian Advocate, quoted in the P. Journal, 28 July 1893.

4
Ibid.

Northern people during the war were drawn towards the plantation pleasantries /sic/ of the South. The lot of the fat, fun-loving negro, the happiest working class in the world, was for years pictured in bitter bondage. The slave was represented as longing for freedom, and during the war praying through the night for the coming of the national troops. These moving, though mistaken, fancies, and much more of the same sort stirred the philanthropic heart of the cotton thread millionaires and the rich army contractors turned virtuous. A great sum was sent South for the education of the negro.

Moreover, Southern commonwealths began after the war to tax white property holders heavily to educate the sons of non-taxpaying negroes.

The negro laborer received as much money for his coarse work as the ex-soldier of Lee. The white man consumed more of his earnings in house and rent, clothing and food, hence he could not spare his son at school. He needed his boy at the plow to aid in bringing up the family. The negro boy first learned in 'free schools' to read and write, then he learned in these technical schools how to make find shoes, buggies, saddles, etc.¹

It seemed that Lafferty's concern was over the 'hallowed' privilege of higher education, as he continued,

Who will dare say that the olive colored octoroons and quadroons, bright mulattoes and heiresses of wealthy men of mixed blood, will not be sought in the next century by impunious, thriftless and idle young men of the white race? Negro maidens are seen at certain colleges for women of high degree in the North. Where will it grow?

Consider the future of the friendless and fatherless boy of the white race in the South. Can he pay \$500 to attend Stevens institute in New York? Can he command money for board and raiment while a student at any state school with a small annex of tools and shop? He hasn't money enough to buy even a railroad ticket to such a college.²

But Lafferty's words were twisting a deeper thread than most Southern generations would ever be able to fathom. His hand was on the thread by which this woeful generation was bound to the slave empire Past. Hence,

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

in the wake of the cyclone horror, ruined crops, and economic collapse, when wretched and homeless whites grappled for a way out--the editor of the leading Methodist publication of the South told them

Grandchildren of warlike men with historic names, who made the Southern army the synonym of dauntless courage, are drifting towards /impoverishment/, and in the century dawning there will come to pass social conditions that would stir the corpses in the jackets of gray.

. . . Statesmen among us have robbed the ex-soldier of Lee to educate the black competitors of his children. Then Northern millionaires, in hatred of the paroled citizens, have endowed colleges of /sic/ tools and machines to equip the ex-slave to surpass and subjugate the sons of the Confederate /sic/ in the struggle for the best pay and position in the skilled trades.¹

Hence, this Methodist editor declared the great threat of the day to whites was their subsidization of education for Blacks. Lafferty also implied that economics, not escoteric concerns, was the reason for this generation of Southern whites' and Blacks' urgent desire for schools for their children. (The priority the Pike area Blacks and whites put upon education was especially evidenced during this year by their pre-occupation after the cyclone with rebuilding, above all, their schools.)

And in the wake of the Black teacher protest and the cyclone devastation, another church spokesman, Journal editor Reverend Lee, not only omitted appeals to prayer and the providential God who received so much coverage in the Journal, but Lee began to help the people of Pike get on a course of fear and darkness.

As the question of local taxation for school purposes arose towards September, Lee published a series of editorials indicating the "love thy neighbor" ethic was in jeopardy in Pike county. One editorial declared

¹
Ibid.

the whole public school system in Georgia was untenable and that it was "no more the duty of my neighbor to educate my child than it is his duty to clothe that child."¹ The editorial furthermore argued, "when I shift the responsibility of which we are speaking onto the shoulders of a more thrifty neighbor I have dishonored the child and compromised my respect for home."² (The editorial implied that the reason Blacks were not in the best economic position was a lack of thriftiness on their part.)

Interestingly this staunchly independent opinion that the parents were solely responsible for a child's education was subscribed to by the confederate veteran father of Zebulon's Misses Lizzie and Ruby Baker. "Papa felt it was his duty to provide for our education. He didn't think anyone owed him any help. And he put a lot of emphasis on all of us getting educated."³

The same attitude prevailed in Pike ex-slave Warren Settles' household, except there it was the wife and mother, ex-slave Lucy Settles, who especially possessed the fervent dream that all her eleven children be educated. According to the Settles' ninety-eight-year-old daughter, Mattie Settles Whatley, "Mamma especially loved talking about the Lord, and she loved education for her children."⁴ Lucy Settles also bore a

¹
P. Journal, 15 September 1893.

²
Ibid.

³
Interview with Elizabeth and Ruby Baker, Zebulon, Georgia,
2 January 1981.

⁴
Interview with Mattie Jo Settles Whatley, Atlanta, Georgia,
1 March 1981.

considerable part of the financial burden of seeing her dream of education for her children realized. And that burden was no minor one, although the zeal of this itinerant Pike Black midwife for education knew no limits. She determined that in view of the lack of a high school for Blacks in the county, her children, girls as well as boys, would get the finest education available to Blacks in the South--at the outstanding Black schools in Atlanta: Spelman and Morehouse seminaries and Atlanta University. And when her children complained that she was always going somewhere to deliver somebody's baby, Mrs. Settles let them know that she wanted them to be able to have "spending change" in Atlanta.¹

In this Georgia county where the dream of education apparently burned brightly in many homes despite severe hard times, Pike Journal editor Parry Lee, however, concluded in September of 1892 on the matter of local taxation for school purposes, "Pike don't /sic/ want it and it is a mere waste of breath to urge it. A school that deserves to live can do so on its own merits. A great deal of the public school fund now goes to teachers who deserve to be taught themselves. . . ."2 And hence the masses of poorer children in the county apparently were condemned in the 1890's to sporadic days of learning without sufficient books in the insufferable conditions of Georgia's rural schoolhouses.

In addition to Journal editor Lee's (and Lafferty's) faltering religious stewardship and Griffin's church members' lethargy in these grim

1

Ibid.

2

P. Journal, 22 September 1893.

times, a Black Pike preacher would be arrested for burglary (near Christmastime) and the Barnesville white Baptist Church pastor--an ex-cowboy from Texas"--was arrested in August in Macon, where he was found intoxicated "in a negro house . . . with a woman of questionable reputation."¹ (The Journal declared concerning the Barnesville pastor, "Barnesville has a scandal now that has stirred her very much . . . /the Baptist pastor/ claims to have been drugged and carried there, but the weight of evidence is decidedly against his version of the affair.")²

Also during this hard period a large crowd from Zebulon gathered for religious camp meeting at Mt. Zion, but apparently it was just as much a social gathering as a religious occasion and unlike the regular Zebulon Methodist Wednesday night prayer meetings, these night services were not so well attended "as many of the visitors left."³

Also, as some of the Pike area white church leadership especially faltered as the storms of life bore in on this middle Georgia section, another growing dark current took expression at a Black church near Griffin. At the Nebo church at the end of September, a crowd of young white men and "a few ladies" attended an exhibition held by two Blacks for their own race. According to the Griffin News, two Blacks at the exhibition were then killed as "a row was raised between the negroes and the white men," and "indiscriminant shooting became the order of the

1

P. Journal, 18 August 1893.

2

Ibid.

3

P. Journal, 1 September 1893.

day."¹

Also in the political sphere a dark current was evidenced in the Pike area in 1893, as a white man named Crowder stabbed another white man (J. D. Touchstone) at the polls in Spalding's Mount Zion district. According to the News, with a knife Crowder "cut Touchstone a deep slash across the abdomen penetrating the abdominal cavity," and was arrested when Touchstone was found to be in dangerous condition.²

In that local election the Democrats carried Spanding; but, as sources on the local election in Pike were not available, it can only be assumed that it was uneventful, since the Griffin News dutifully reported on all Populist election day 'near-victories' in Pike.³

One interesting, and probably fateful, occurrence in the Pike electorate in 1893, however, was the sudden increase in the number of registered voters--white and Black. In 1892 the total number of registered white voters (with defaulters) was 1,422; the total of registered Blacks with defaulters was 1,105. By 1893 the whites totaled 1,507 and the Blacks 1,437. In 1893's severe economic conditions there were also more defaulters (125 whites; 434 Blacks) than at any other time during the Populist period.⁴

¹
Griffin News, 1 October 1893.

²
Griffin News, 5 January 1893.

³
Ibid.

⁴
Pike County, Ga. Tax Digest (1892, 1893).

Regarding the increased Black votership in Pike; it should be remembered that, according to Wilhoit and others, it was this Populist era upsurge in Black voting which stimulated resentment in whites of both factions and hastened the move towards Black disfranchisement.¹

Although it is not clear if one or both parties (Democrats and Populists) might have registered the new voters in Pike's local election, it is clear that a concerted effort was made in 1893 to shore up the Solid South throughout Georgia. The Macon Telegraph's call for (white) primaries was, for example, repeatedly published in the Pike Journal.² On the other hand, it also seemed for a while in June of 1893 that the Populist 'big gun', Tom Watson, would invade the Pike area with a series of speeches. The Journal quipped, "It is said he will be conservative and plain," but no more was heard of Watson's coming to the area until his arrival at Barnesville in 1894.³--The Pike area visit would have been a part of Watson's 1893 "crusade-campaign", which involved extensive meetings opened usually by prayer followed with long expositions on the severe economic conditions, Cleveland's financial theories--and "political equality for the Negro."⁴

But in 1893 the cyclone-devastated Pike area, as seen, would have

¹
Wilhoit, "Populism's Impact," 119-20.

²
P. Journal, 18 May 1893.

³
P. Journal, 30 June 1893.

⁴
People's Party Paper, quoted in Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 252.

probably not cherished such exposition on Blacks. For after a summer of Journal short accounts of Black strikebreakers in Kansas and Birmingham, followed by the Journal's anti-Negro education tirades, a mood of dark resentment towards Blacks had apparently crystallized in the county.

And whereas Governor Northen, who was battling lynch law opponents in Georgia in 1893, had, as seen, intervened twice in 1892 to stop Pike's hanging of a white man found guilty of murder in two successive trials, no one could stop the Pike citizens' determination to hideously snuff out the life of a young Black man on the gallows late in 1893. The young man, Will Stanley, had been convicted of murdering another Black. And although many Blacks had killed other Blacks and there had been many murderers in Pike's mounting crime wave, it seemed a dark compulsion designated in 1893 that a Black boy had to be hanged.

It should be noted that hangings in Pike in this era were a grim affair. Hundreds and even thousands of people from all over the countryside rode into the county on wagons and horses to watch a victim die. Lucy Whatley noted that her father recalled that in one hanging in the Pike area, the Black victim had been sentenced to hang for a given number of minutes, and in that time the poor wretch's eyes all but popped out of their sockets.¹ Zebulon's aged Baker sisters recalled that at the time of a hanging in Zebulon, their father would not even let them so much as look up the road in the direction of the gallows.²

¹

Interview with Lucy Whatley, Atlanta, Georgia, 13 April 1984.

²

Interview with Elizabeth and Ruby Baker, Zebulon, Georgia, 2 January 1981.

Concerning the hanging of the young Black Will Stanley in 1893, it should be noted that Stanley's last hours were put under scrutiny by Journal editor Rev. Lee. But as can be seen by this Journal 'death-watch' account, Stanley was well anchored and survived his last hours because of his religion--despite the fact that his county had singled him out for this gruesome victimization:

Will Stanley, a colored boy about 26 years of age will die on the gallows for the killing of another negro boy by the name of Martin Thomas . . . murder /was/ without provocation, defense theory was it was accidental.

His nerves were strong and steady as he entered heartily into the religious service held in his behalf by Rev. Akin, 'Will,' said the preacher, 'maybe this is the only way the Lord had to bring you through.'

'Yes,' he responded, 'I been thinking 'bout that myself.-- I feel like I have been pardoned for all my sins and at peace with God all mankind, I can't lie to God and the Father knows I did not shoot Martin intention. /sic/¹

His last rituals of life about to end, Will also shared another revelation on his fate with his jailer:

' . . . I want to say to everybody if I had been where I ought to have been I would not been in trouble. I have been treated mighty well in jail and I feels thankful for it.

' . . . Yes,' said jailor Wells, 'Will has been such a good boy in jail that I am obliged to feel tenderly for him.'²

The Journal then took the reader up to the precious moments before Stanley's ghastly death:

. . . The death watch informs us that he rested well last night--better in fact than the other prisoners. He awoke early and partook of a roast bird prepared by jailor Wells, which he seemed to relish . . .

At 10:00 A.M. Stanley is taking his last bath,

1

P. Journal, 24 November 1893.

2

Ibid.

preparatory to dressing in a new black suit which has been provided for him by the sheriff. He feels, he says, that the Lord is punishing him for his sins . . . The jail is strongly guarded as is also the gallows and large crowds are being continually repulsed.

12:25--The friends and relatives have assembled in the jail and are impressively singing 'On My Journey Home! Lord have Mercy,' and 'Hark to the Tomb.'

The death tomb was sprung at 1:13 and like a bullet he shot through six feet and seven inches of space into eternity. . . .¹

In these hard times in crime-ridden beleaguered Pike county, a white mob rose up about two weeks after Will Stanley's hanging. Lucius Holt, a Black accused of a viscious murder was vengefully executed and his body riddled with bullets. Though Holt's was the only Pike lynching to be recorded in the N.A.A.C.P. statistics on lynching in the 1890's, it will be seen that at least two other lynchings occurred in Pike at about the same time as Holt's. Hence, it would appear that the Stanley hanging might have been a ruefully cathartic experience for some darker minds in the Pike area. But more research would be needed on this matter. On the other hand, it should be noted that oral sources do not confer on the matter of the Pike area's history regarding white lynchings and assassinations of Blacks. Plemon Whatley, born in the Griffin area, noted that it was more in outlying counties (than in the Pike area) that there was a history of untold numbers of Blacks having been murdered by whites, the bodies thrown in rivers, and nothing more said about it.² Lucy Whatley from listening to her grandfather and others concluded that in Pike "It was just nothing to whites to kill a Black person. That was 'just another nigger' in their

1

Ibid.

2

Interview with Plemon Whatley, Atlanta, Georgia, 27 December 1978.

eyes".¹ According to Miss Whatley's information, the Pike area white generation of the 1890's and well thereafter "were just solemn people. They could be polite and still tie someone to a tree and torture and kill him." Miss Whatley concluded, "They didn't know any better . . . didn't know the difference between the Old Testament and the New. They thought they were right to do vengeance."²

Concerning Lucius Holt's lynching in Pike in 1893, the following incredible Pike Journal account reveals the horrifying Southern 'code' of mob justice which terrified Blacks for so many years; but also the account indicates that, in this one case, the lynch victim was probably guilty of a most heinous crime:

Rapine and Murder--Held a Bloody Carnival in Pike Last Week Arthur Reynolds Brutally /sic/ murdered and robbed, and his slayer, Lucius Holt, col., takes the old reliable Plow-line Route fer /sic/ another country . . . one of the bloodiest chapters in the criminal history of Pike county is now a matter for record.

On the 30th . . . a young man by the name of Arthur Reynolds living in Meriwether County over the river came over to Concord to sell a load of cotton seed. He left Concord about sunset and started for home. The team he was driving reached home about 10 o'clock at night. The father of Arthur Reynolds immediately went out and was horror-struck to find that the wagon body was covered with blood and no driver to be seen.

Lucius Holt, a negro who was living on the place pretended to have been attracted by the lamp light at the wagon and ran out to see what was the matter.

With as little delay as possible the old gentleman put the negro in the wagon with instructions to drive on back in the direction to Concord . . . Mr. Reynolds and another son set out in search of their missing relative . . . they came upon a scene that will forever have its impress upon those

1

Interview with Lucy Whatley, Atlanta, Georgia, 13 April 1984.

2

Ibid.

who saw it . . .

Lying in a gully on the road side and weltering in his heart's blood was the body of Arthur Reynolds. Near by was a heavy green oak stick bathed in blood . . . Blood was scattered and spattered in every direction . . .

The skull was crushed in from all sides and one blow was received on the mouth, nose and forehead which lacerated and disfigured the members beyond description. The teeth had even been beaten from their sockets . . .¹

Concerning the murder suspect the Journal further declared,

When the body was found the negro Holt manifested much agitation. He suddenly became very sleepy and indicated his intention of returning home to go to bed . . .

. . . it was learned that Lucius Holt had been seen on this side of the river after sunset on the evening of the killing. He was going in the direction of Concord, and another negro said he was 'going to meet a fellow?' He was arrested and blood spots were found on his person; he had cut off his shirt sleeves and in his pocket a pair of brass knucks and Arthur Reynold's bloody pocket book containing about \$11.00 . . . When confronted with this evidence of guilt the negro acknowledged that he had hit young Reynolds twice on the head with the knucks but said the murder was done with the oak stick by another negro. The main fault found with this confession, however, was the fact that the negro whom he implicated had been dead three months. When told of this he quickly shifted the deed on another who had no trouble in establishing an alibi.

The coroner and jury had proceeded with the investigation until far in the day and as the shades of evening were drawing on, the full force of the above facts had just dawned upon the large crowd which had assembled to watch the case develop, and ever anon grim mutterings escaped the lips of the crowd against the negro.

. . . This was 'hangman's day' and when the light of Sat. lit up creation in Pike there might have been seen near the spot on which poor A. Reynold lost his life, the ghastly remains of his murderer L. Holt hanged afterwards riddled with bullets.²

It should be noted that in the case of Holt, as in the case of Will Stanley, Black 'victims' were seen as three-dimensional personalities in

1

P. Journal, 8 December 1893.

2

P. Journal, 8 December 1893.

the Pike County Journal and not merely given the 'black brute', harshly impersonal treatment of the Griffin paper. The Griffin News editor's views on Holt's lynching, for example, could not have been clearer. He asserted concerning the lynching in Pike:

As predicted by the News and Sun, the outraged citizens of West Pike did not wait for the slow delays of the law but executed summary vengeance upon the murderer of poor Arthur Reynolds Friday night . . . The coroner's jury /searched findings detailed/ soon found a verdict of murder, and the citizen's simply executed the proper decree in such cases. . . .¹

In all this darkness and violence in Pike county some light did shine at the end of 1893, but only to be extinguished as the same family of Cowings who had provided a leader for the Black teachers' protest, and for the brave Black Populist meeting at Zebulon in summer of '82-- had one more courageous soul to give. W. S. Cowing lifted his lone voice to protest mob law in Pike. (Parry Lee had seemed indifferent and resigned to the murder; and no Populist seems to have spoken against it in the local Democratic press.)

All that is known of the Cowing protest is found in a letter which had been printed in a Black paper the Griffin Echo soon after the mob killing. Fortunately, Journal editor Parry Lee felt compelled to copy the letter "for sufficient reasons." The letter which Lee called "a bungling article from one of the notorious Cowing negroes of West Pike" began:

Dear Editor Please allow me space in your valuable paper to let the public know that the West Pike boys /outlaw gang/ are yet alive. Lawlessness and disorder have taken the day and

1

Griffin News, 3 December 1893.

the colored people are much disturbed over the lynching of two of our citizens, one name unknown to me, the other a Mr. Foster of Hollansville.

The lynching that was committed at the Double Bridges, was a brutal outrage and a shame upon the human generation . . . Shall we sit still and wait for this trail to come up at the grand judgement, or shall we take steps to bring this band of outlaws to the public bar of justice . . .¹

Hence clearly this letter, which drove many whites, including Parry Lee, to near frenzy, spoke of two lynchings; but all other available sources speak only of Holt's lynching. (The evidence is clear, however, that statistics such as those of the N.A.A.C. P. 1919 study uncovered probably only a part of the brutality to which Blacks succumbed during the 1890's Populist era.)

Also Cowings boldly admonished:

In my town they boast of this brutish deed--a deed that the devils in hell were above committing . . . --but our best citizens of white say they were right. True enough, this man was accused of robbing. It might have been true and it might not. True or untrue, as a colored citizen he was as much subject to a lawful trial as the whitest man on the globe . . . Old Pike, who has been noted for order and law, no doubt but that it will some day mingle the blood in one stream of her two races. I can only hope that this may be avoided, but under the present condition it would not surprise me at any hour. Citizens of Pike, let me hear from you through the newspapers of our race. We are lawful citizens and must fight this case before the superior court. Where is the executive board of the republican party /sic/ of Pike? Are you asleep, or have you no duties to perform?

Let the newspapers hear from you. Why not call a meeting of the colored people of Pike to investigate the indignity of this lawless band?

Let the preacher of this race rehearse the matter in their pulpits. Let them advise the people to give of their earthly means or money to support this interesting case.

My colored friends, wake up to the sense of your duties. Think not yourselves, your wives, your sons and daughters are safe from the fiery darts of this band of fiends . . . Prepare yourselves to meet every emergency . . . Pardon me, I pray

¹

P. Journal, 22 December 1893.

thee, for this long letter, yet it is not me, but the blood of the dead negroes crying from the earth, 'Give me, give me, I pray thee, my dues. Give me my trial before the courts of equity.

Yours for law and order,¹

W.S. Cowings

As a result of Cowings' courageous protest, other evidence of at least one other Black having been lynched (besides Holt) was furthermore found in Parry Lee's frenzied reaction to the Cowings letter. Lee seemed to lose all composure, his syntax--like Cowings'--becomes difficult to follow: yet he never once denied that there were two lynchings. Instead he protested, it seems for the first time in many days since the lynching:

. . . we are opposed to the principle of mob violence, for when it is resorted to indiscriminantly innocent men are liable to suffer irrpable /sic/ injury. --The best people of this county are opposed to mob law --the unsupported statement of Cowing to the contrary, notwithstanding. . . .²

By 1894 Parry Lee would call for gospel evangelists to set up tents in the county; but in the dark close of 1893, the Reverend Lee lapsed into this incredible, bitter defense of the 'eye-for-eye' justice of pagan cultures:

It will be to the interest of negroes of Cowing's stripe, however, to remember that in this county there are a few unwritten laws against which it is not safe to go counter. For example, when an innocent man is foully assaulted and murdered for a few paltry dollars and his slayer acknowledges that he has committed the crime, and there can be no doubt about it, then it is a rule of human conduct as inflexible as the laws of the Medes and Persians that the brute shall be hanged to

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid.

the nearest limb. . . .¹

Lee also justified lynching in the case of rape and implied that the other Black lynch victim mentioned by Cowings had been killed for a rape charge. Lee noted, "When a helpless woman is brutally assaulted and her assailant is identified beyond all question, he must summarily suffer."²

But the Reverend Lee went a tragic, fateful step further in declaring,

Let the negro who writes to the Echo, and who attempts to fire and inflame the base passions of his race, learn the first principles of right and practice them in his life and we'll guarantee that his blood will never be unlawfully spilled.³

A week later Parry Lee wrote,

We learn that W.S. Cowing, the negro fire-eater, whose letter we printed last week, has been waited upon by a committee of responsible citizens, and he made up his mind on short notice to skip the country.⁴

Thus an outspoken, courageous voice of Black protest against white brutality was silenced in Pike county. The Cowings lynching outcry was a second significant example, however, of an independent Black political protest tied indirectly to Populism and the 'spirit of Populist revolt' stirring in Pike county in the 1890's.

W.S. Cowings disappeared from the Pike County tax digests in 1893

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid.

⁴
P. Journal, 29 December 1893.

and was apparently heard of no more in available sources on the Populist era in Pike.

CHAPTER VIII

SYNTHESIS: THE ROAD TO DISFRANCHISEMENT 1894

Thus with one of the Black Populist Cowings viciously silenced in the wake of some five hanging brutalities against Blacks, and with the Black teachers' protest also extinguished, Pike area Blacks faced an uncertain, foreboding prospect in election year 1894.

Crime continued in Pike in a viscious wave during this year of continued deep economic depression nationwide. Journal editor Lee would in this year, as said, call for evangelists to set up their tents in Pike.¹ Also as the year began, pastors of Griffin's Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Christian, Hanleiter and DeVotie churches, along with the general secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, decided to hold a week of united prayer services beginning at 10 o'clock each day.²

In this fitful year Blacks' crimes against each other seemed to increase. In February came the horrifying disclosure that dogs scratching in the earth had uncovered two Black babies' decayed bodies.³ The mothers of the two babies were arraigned on murder charges. A Black man apparently gave the women medicine to induce abortion.⁴ This case, with many

¹
P. Journal, 5 July 1894.

²
Griffin News, 7 January 1894.

³
P. Journal, 16 February 1894.

⁴
Ibid.

others demonstrated the seriousness with which "Black-on-Black" crime was treated in Pike during the era, and also called attention to the fact that Pike, unlike much of the South, gave Blacks extensive access to court judicial processes in the 1890's.¹

This was especially a noteworthy condition as crime was so rampant in Pike during the era, although it is not clear whether the Pike courts were overtaxed. Also many Black crimes were very provocative, yet local opinion, as expressed in the Journal, was often surprisingly tolerant. In one example of this tolerance, the Journal reported on a crime of a Black against a white that

. . . Babe Green, a young man living on the Griffin road was maliciously and dangerously shot by a negro. The negro was coming in his direction and was about to drive recklessly over some negro children when an old gentleman, Richard Green remonstrated with him. The negro cursed the old man furiously, which brought Babe Green to the rescue. The negro turned on him and shattered his thigh with a pistol ball. We have not learned the correct name of the negro, and while several arrests have been made the right man has not yet been apprehended.²

Another example of a provocative Black crime occurred in April of 1894, when Parry Lee published long sermons decrying liquor; at that time local Blacks wanted their share of the ransom offered by the Governor in the capture of a Black who had assassinated another Black boy near the drug epidemic town of Milner. But when a Black mass killer, Charlie Poach, struck against his fourth victim on the Bolton plantation in April, he vanished before the sheriff's posse. The Journal talked of feeling

¹

Saunders, "Populists and the Negro," 248.

²

P. Journal, 7 October 1892.

in the air that Poach would be hanged when caught.¹

Also in 1894 the economic news continued to be grim in Pike; one effort to start a canning factory was snuffed out by freezing spring weather which made canning peaches and other fruits impossible.² And the Journal's escapist literary vignettes continued. One bit of good news, apparently, was the reopening of a factory in the area.--It had been closed down for a much longer time than at first thought.³

Also as the year began a terrible warning note resounded in the political arena. The Pike Journal printed the Rome Tribune's ominous charge that

. . . It is a pity that every tax payer in Georgia could not have seen the election in Rome Tuesday, and the scenes which have preceded it. It will take intense disgust on the part of the whole people to drive the politician trimmers in the legislature to enact a decent law. . . . So long as elections can be bought, there is no stability in our institutions. . . . Disfranchisement is the same result, whether done directly by statute or effected by stuffing the ballot box with illegal or purchased votes.⁴

Already by 1894 several Southern states had taken steps to restrict the Black vote--though no state but Mississippi had drawn up a new state constitution. And the future looked bleak for Georgia Black voters.⁵

¹
P. Journal, 19 April 1894; 27 April 1894.

²
P. Journal, 17 May 1894.

³
P. Journal, 3 May 1891.

⁴
Rome Tribune, quoted in P. Journal, 15 March 1894.

⁵
Saunders, "Populists and the Negro," 242.

The depression worsened as Cleveland's gold-centered fiscal policy and worsening world economic conditions swelled the rolls of the nation's unemployed drastically. Able-bodied men turned to crime, begged, or became tramps.¹ An 'army' of these unfortunate men--Coxey's 'army'--made its way across the land and converged on the nation's capital. They wanted relief! But it would not be their efforts, largely ridiculed in the press, which would get the world's attention. That distinction would go to the Pullman strike of some 4,000 of the nation's railroad employees. President Cleveland would use the 'blanket' injunction for the first time against strikers for "unlawful" gathering. And he sent in federal troops into Chicago to arrest the strikers, despite the wishes of the Illinois Governor.

As chairman of the Populist state executive committee and editor of the People's Party Paper, Tom Watson avidly attacked the Democrats for the Pullman strike, for their coinage policy reversal, and for the refusal of the Supreme Court to accept as constitutional the income tax legislation passed by the Democrats.

On the local 'front', the Democratic Pike Journal joined the statewide call for (white) primaries. The Journal published the Macon Telegraph's assertion that especially in the gubernatorial race, primaries had to be used. According to the Telegraph,

. . . Already much bad feelings /sic/ has been aroused in some communities, growing out of charges of unfairness in manipulation of mass meetings. So far as we know, these charges are untrue. . . .²

¹ Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 177.

² Macon Telegraph, quoted in P. Journal, 18 May 1894.

In the state the Democrats nominated W. Y. Atkinson on a platform of bimetallism and increased public school appropriations "as far as business conditions permit"--and emphasizing local self government (which, in Pike, as seen, opposed local support of the public schools).¹ The Democrats furthermore condemned mob law and "socialistic, paternalistic and centralizing idea."² For their gubernatorial candidate they took W. Y. Atkinson, the Georgia speaker of the house of representatives and chairman of the state executive committee.

At the Populist gubernatorial convention in Atlanta, the number of Black delegates had increased from two in 1892 to twenty-four in 1894. The Pike Journal quoted the Atlanta Journal to the effect that there were "quite a number" of Negro delegates at the convention and that they were taking an active part in the convention.³ Hence whether they were largely on the periphery--as certain historians would insist, or more actively involved--the Black delegates to the Populist convention were portrayed through the local press and in the state in a political activist role.

At Atlanta the convention nominated Judge James K. Hines for governor. Hines, a small-town lawyer who had become an influential Atlanta legal figure, stood on Alliance and Populist principles. The Pike Journal, moreover, praised Hines as "probably the best man in the party."⁴ The

¹ Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 181.

² Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 181.

³ P. Journal, 24 May 1894.

⁴ Ibid.

local newspaper concluded, however, that "Quite an effort will be made to capture the negro vote."¹

The most heated battle in the campaign was again Watson's and James C. C. Black's contest in the "Terrible Tenth". The Negro vote was again the focus of the turbulent 1894 campaign in the Tenth. The Democratic incumbent, Major Black, counteracted the strong Populist appeal in that district with his outspoken position favoring Negro jury service.² Black furthermore showed that he had voted on free bagging and ties for Blacks to package their cotton, and had voted for silver coinage to put more money in circulation for Black workers' benefit.--He was also proud of his county's record eight annual months of free public education (which compared favorably with many Populist counties); and he held up the fact that he had gotten jobs for Blacks with government.³

Watson, on the other hand wove his "web" of peculiarly contradictory but appetizing appeals to both white voters and Blacks. And in July his 'web' swept over the Pike area, as the Hon. Thomas E. Watson and Judge J. K. Hines descended upon middle Georgia. Apparently large crowds turned out to hear them--first at Griffin. For according to C. L. Butler of (Weaver, in Pike County), writing in the People's Party Paper, this is what happened to a Democratic candidate who had hoped to find an audience in Zebulon on the day Hines and Watson were in Griffin:

¹
Ibid.

²
Saunders, "Populists and The Negro," 253.

³
Ibid., 253-54.

. . . Hon Robert Weaver of Milledgeville, able Democrat lawyer, had appointment to address people as 'aspirant for congressional honors'. But on that same day Hon. T. E. Watson and Judge J. K. Hines addressing people at Griffin. Whitfield 'did not know the people of old Pike had become disgusted with so-called Democracy . . . he did not find enough country people in Zebulon to get up a six-hand game of marbles, for the people had gone to hear Watson and Hinds. . . .'¹

Excitement over the arrival of Hines and Watson in Barnesville apparently caused confusion in the local Populist ranks, and it was not certain at the Barnesville meeting just whom the local party was offering as the Populist candidate for Georgia representative.

Watson and Hines obviously drew large crowds at Griffin and Barnesville, although the Journal obviously intended to be lacking in its brief report that the men's speeches were, "from the Populist standpoint . . . very strong and forcible, though by no means unanswerable."² The writer for this local Democratic organ conceded, that "The people who heard the speeches were entertained /by/ bright bits of wit and artful appeals for votes," but he concluded: "As to what affect the speeches will have the writer is unable to surmise."³

Shortly after this apparent success in the Pike area, Watson would advance the Populist position (in the People's Party Paper) that Blacks should teach only Black school children and whites, white school children. And while Watson's campaign was very vigorous, he eventually became

¹
People's Party Paper, 6 July 1894.

²
P. Journal, 20 July 1894.

³
Ibid.

somewhat entangled in his web of contradictory statements. At the end of the campaign he noted in the Populist newspaper that Populists had not given support to Black jury participation.¹

But apparently the Populists had strong support in Pike county. Their support was also apparently still strong at neighboring Monroe, as the third Black lynching victim fell to the white mob at Forsyth in June of 1894. Owen Opietress was killed for a charge of rape at Forsyth.²

Just a week before the scheduled August 4th Populist primary, the Journal noted that "quite a number of the adherents of that party" had met in Zebulon the Tuesday before, to reduce the list of possible candidates to two names, that after two ballots, the Populists nominated C. C. Holmes and Thomas Barrett.³ One indication July 27, 1894 that there was considerable opposition to the Populists in Pike was the injunction given these candidates in the Journal's brief, piece on the meeting. According to the Democratic newspaper, Barrett and Holmes "are enjoined to make no canvass, but run along quietly so that no friction may be the result."⁴

The Populist Party Paper also focused attention on the Pike primary in announcing that primary in Zebulon was to nominate candidates for

1

Saunders, "Populists and The Negro," 245-247.

2

N.A.A.C.P., Thirty Years of Lynching

3

P. Journal, 27 July 1894.

4

Ibid.

representative, District committeemen, with the return to be made in Zebulon the following Monday. And the Populist organ stressed that by order of the Pike Populist /Executive/ Committee, of which W. J. Mullins was Chairman, "All Populists, regardless of color, are entitled to and are invited to take part in said election."¹

Almost nothing else was said about the interracial primary in Pike county's official newspaper or in the People's Party Paper. But by Democratic inferences in the Journal it is clear that this Populist primary marked a turning point for the Populists in Pike. Tom Watson and Hines had been able to deliver the victory in Pike that Cyclone Davis' peculiar "circus" reception in 1892 had forestalled.

Blacks probably voted in record numbers in the Zebulon Populist primary. For after an apparently light turnout for the Democratic primary, the Pike Journal was vindictive over the report in Watson's Daily Press ("Something About Pike County") that Atkinson had polled 400 votes in that primary. The Pike newspaper insisted that Atkinson actually got 589 votes, and that 823 votes, "white votes at that" // were polled at Pike's Democratic primary.²

Also the urgent tone that Democratic notices took on after the Populist primary are a further indication that Blacks and whites in Pike probably gave Populism a tremendous mandate. The Journal railed, for example, that "The 'two thousand and three hundred other votes," which the Press

¹

People's Party Paper, 3 August 1894.

²

P. Journal, 16 August 1894.

apparently had predicted for Hines, "must be manufactured if he gets them in Pike County." According to the local newspaper, "every democratic /sic/ candidate will carry the county, and by a big majority, from 500 to 1,000."¹

Apparently conditions in Pike were such that the Democrats sought to shore up their position with something more than rhetoric. The Journal announced on August 23rd a "grand democratic /sic/ rally" at Barnesville, at which were "people from Pike, Upson, Monroe, Spalding, Meriwether, Monroe, Butts expected." Sharing the roster with the Barnesville Cornet Band would be "Atkinson, Sen. John B. Gordon 'the gallant Southern hero' & Gen. Clement A. Evans the peerless Christian /sic/ gentleman and statesman. . . ." The Journal declared, "No democrat or populist within fifty miles of Barnesville should miss it."²

During this period the Journal also stepped up its propaganda campaign against the Populists. The day after the Pike Democratic primary was defended against the Daily Press 'onslaught', the county newspaper noted in its "Short Items for Home Folks Especially" that there was "Not enough corn left on the Populist kolb /sic/ to feed a chicken."³ The Journal editor also relished that the Populists were "very much disconcerted" over Black Republicans' rejection of that party at the Blacks' state convention in Atlanta (convened no long after the Pike Democratic primary), as he noted that

1

P. Journal, 16 August 1894.

2

P. Journal, 23 August 1894.

3

P. Journal, 17 August 1894.

The republican state convention, composed almost entirely of negroes, which met in Atlanta recently has very much disconcerted the populists. The Pops have been banking largely on the negro vote and now the negro comes along and says the populists are the men who have been lynching their race. So it goes!

The negroes refuse to tumble to the populist racket.¹

Asserting the Negroes "propose to maintain their party organization and thus eclipse the populist party /sic/," Lee concluded:

. . . This must be painfully humiliating to the little band of populists who are in the condition of Oppor's hermit--

'There once was a hermit
 who lived near a stream,
 In a pleasant, commodious cave;
 Folks glared at him daily
 with wonder supreme,
 And he lived on the presents
 they gave
 But one morning he found,
 with much dreadful dismay
 That he could hardly open his lips
 A new hermit settled just over the way,
 And himself in a total eclipse.²

In the period just before the local and state elections in Pike, the Journal's invective against Watson was in no wise diminished. In mid-September the local newspaper quoted Mr. L. P. Bames, "populist until recently", as he refuted Watson's recent claim (made in last issue of the Douglasville New South) that he (Watson) never made any money out of farmers. According to Bames (as reprinted in the Journal):

--Watson begged populists of Georgia to raise him \$5,000 to contest Black's congress seat; \$200 from his hearers after advising them to subscribe for /sic/ his paper, boycott democr. /sic/ press

\$200 credited on his mortgage of \$1,700. While speaking

1
P. Journal, 7 September 1894.

2
 Ibid.

over state \$300 sent and credited to same mortgage \$250 more to mortgage then \$275 on mortgage.¹

The Journal countered, 'Will Watson deny that he is an anarchist himself?'² Then, in the same article, the Pike newspaper accused the Populist leader of a more serious 'crime' as it asked: " . . . Will Watson deny that he has promised the negroes of Georgia that he will let them hold office and put them on the jury?³

"This is enough," claimed the Pike newspaper, 'For our pen grows weary of relating his anarchistic and socialistic utterances.'⁴ A week later, however, the Journal was revived; the Democratic daily declared

If Tom Watson and his crowd were to triumph in Georgia, confidence in the people and business of the state would be largely destroyed and we would have far worse times than we have had.⁵

In the next issue of the Journal, a short piece in 'Round About--Short Items for Home Folks Especially' declared, 'The populist pandora box would have been the last thing that a democrat would have thought about monkeying with. But it had to leave /sic/.'⁶ (Presumably what is meant here is the Populists had to leave the Democratic fold.)

¹
P. Journal, 13 September 1894.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid.

⁴
Ibid.

⁵
P. Journal, 20 September 1894.

⁶
P. Journal, 21 September 1894.

The Democratic Journal's concerted attack on the Populists had, however, by the end of September, been unable to deter "a big crowd at populist rally", to which Hines failed to come.¹ In reporting the Populist turnout, the newspaper warned local Democrats--in an election time piece entitled "Urgent duty"--that

Twenty years ago /no one/ dared intimate such sentiments /as Populists had/ . . . Democrats assert self. It was a serious matter in 1892, but to our mind it is far more serious now. . . .²

And indeed the election of 1894 proved to be a serious matter, as it was probably one of the most corrupt in the history of the state.

In widely divergent accounts, the Pike County Journal and the People's Party Paper attested that wholesale ballot box stuffing and debauchery of (especially) the Black voter was the order of that day in Pike County. From all sectors involved, the cry was 'Fraud!'

According to the Journal report, which called the election "one of the hottest ever known," the count showed that there were 2,850 votes in ballot boxes and that "Col. Redding, Democratic candidate had lost by over 200 votes."³

This was not to be the final outcome of the election. For, according to the Journal,

. . . The appearance of things . . . indicated that something was wrong. People of various county sections followed

1

P. Journal, 27 September 1894.

2

Ibid.

3

P. Journal, 11 October 1894.

election managers to Zebulon to determine matter's outcome
¹

There must have been considerable tension riding upon horses and assorted country wagons and buggies, as "a big crowd of democrats and populists" assembled in Zebulon--where, according to the Journal account,

. . . The election managers met in the court house and decided to consolidate the returns with only the board, the candidates, and their attorneys, and parties specially interested present. . . .²

"When the decision was made known," said the Democratic newspaper,

the democrats retired, but the populists in the court room positively refused to retire. They declared that they would see the consolidation, and ignored the request of the managers . . .

Upon investigation, it was found that the tally sheets and lists of voters from Lifseys /militia district and precinct/ were not only not properly signed up, but were not signed at all. There were neither signatures of the managers, the name of the precinct or /sic/ date. It was also found that returns from Concord and Piedmont were not signed up properly and, hence, in accordance with the election laws, these three precincts were thrown out.³

Hence the Democratic candidate Col. Redding was given a majority and "declared elected" in a contest which threw out one precinct (Concord) which gave a Democratic majority and two (Lifsey and Piedmont) which gave Populist majorities.⁴

1
 Ibid.

2
 Ibid.

3
 Ibid.

4
 Ibid.

The Journal was quick to note, the justice at Lifsey's precinct "was a son of the populist candidate, but he held the election all the same."¹

Pike Populists and Democrats alike cried 'Fraud!' in 1894. The Democratic Journal declared, "There has probably never been an election in this county in which so much fraud was practiced. . . ." ²--To substantiate its charge, the local newspaper quoted one "well known" Populist and offered statistics on the county, showing that:

According to school census of 1893 /there are/ about 3,000 male citizens competent to vote due to age. /It is/ known that a number of these in Barnesville district didn't vote.

Cyrus Wilson (Populist), well known citizen stated that 30 white men in his district didn't vote and said same true of other county's districts.

Hence fair estimate at least 100, probably 200 didn't attempt to vote. According to tax defaulters of county, certified by county commissioner, 1250 men white and colored disqualified.

Fully 1,500 in Pike didn't care to and were disqualified. Yet 2,850 men voted on Oct. 3, 1894.³

In establishing the distribution of an estimated 800 illegal votes cast in the Pike election, the Journal declared:

We do not doubt that nearly a hundred illegal votes /were/ cast in the Barnesville precinct alone, and the proposition is greater in other sections of the country.

In Lifsey's district 360 votes, only about 200 voters though second district only about 250 voters, yet 237 votes, but 50 of 2nd district's voters voted at Milner, 20-25 at Barnesville and quite a number at Zebulon and at Williamson.⁴

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

4

Ibid.

The Journal placed the blame for the ballot frauds on the Populists, in stating,

It is believed that the populists voted some men in as many as three different precincts on that day . . . also believed that they voted a good number from Spalding and Upson counties.¹

The Democratic newspaper concluded that

. . . In view of the great populist cry of a 'free ballot and fair count' their wholesome /sic/ fraud is outrageous.²

At least one Pike Populist spokesman loudly proclaimed it was absurd for the county's Democrats to cry fraud. In an article entitled "Down in Pike--The Political Methods of Some Democrats", this local Populist advocate--known in the People's Party Paper simply as "Light"³--filed the following report of Democrats' alleged sordid debauching of Black voters in and around the leading town of this 'semi-dry' middle Georgia county:

Mr. Editor--The half has not been told, the half will never be told, and I doubt, the half can ever be told, of the corrupt methods resorted to by democrats to carry the last state election!

In and about Barnesville I know personally something of their corrupt methods and midnight tricks. Ten days before the election, the democrats opened up rooms in Barnesville for consultation with Negroes /sic/.

Their consultations consisted mainly in passing around drinks. These consultation rooms were managed by some of Barnesville's prominent politicians and so-called leading citizens. On Tuesday night before election the climax was reached in 'ways that are dark and tricks that are mean.' Liquor flowed, midnight carousals made the night hideous and everything that could be done to bebauch the negro /sic/ voter.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ People's Party Paper, 26 October 1894.

Light charged Pike Democrats with fraud at the polls in that

On election day at the Barnesville precinct the following things occurred in broad open daylight: whenever a Negro /sic/ presented himself to vote if he had a populist ticket, his tax record was carefully examined, and unless he showed a clear record he was ruled out. Whenever a Negro /sic/ presented himself to vote with a democratic ticket in his hands the democratic challengers would cry out nothing against him, and into the box would go his democratic tickets. All a Negro /sic/ had to do to insure his vote being accept /sic/ was to offer a democratic vote.¹

This local Populist spokesman reflected the sort of interest which only a close observer of the Black community might typically have had, as he thus declared in Watson's People's Party Paper that the majority of Pike's better class of Blacks voted Populist in the October election:

A very large majority of the leading and best and most prosperous Negroes /sic/ voted the populist ticket. Those Negroes /sic/ who could be bought, bulldozed, browbeat and in various ways persuaded, voted the democratic ticket. A large majority of the latter class, of course, were illegal voters on account of non-payment of taxes.²

As if enough had not already been imputed to the local Democratic Party, this report also charged that party hired railroad cars to transport Blacks and illegally vote them in the elections of surrounding counties. Light claimed that

All around Barnesville, in Upson, Pike and Monroe counties, the democrats scoured the country Tuesday night for negro /sic/ voters. They went after them in wagons, and in buggies, had a train of cars on the Macon and Birmingham railroad in waiting to hand them to Thomaston and vote them by the wholesale.³

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid.

"Now Mr. Editor," quipped the Populist reporter, "is it not absurd for the democrats to cry 'fraud' after such conduct on their part?"¹

Light's People's Party Paper tirade concluded

But this is just the way of a democrat. He rushes into the public print and cries 'Fraud'--When he is conscious all the time that he is the rascal that has committed more fraud than a dozen populists could possible perpetrate in a month's time.²

Light's 'nom de plume' followed a warning in the Populist paper: "Keep throwing on the light until it burns and blisters even a democrat's tough hide."³

It becomes apparent that the Negro's vote became the 'cause celebre' of the October election in Pike County. For in addition to Populist revelations or allegations of a debauched Black vote, the Journal reported a post-election episode of mudslinging resulting from charges that Pike Populist Thomas Barrett had preached "social equality" to Pike Blacks. The episode even splashed onto the pages of the Atlanta Constitution, as friendships between contending white politicians of the county apparently dissolved in law suits. According to the Pike Journal account and editorial on the county's raging "social equality" controversy, several affidavits were sworn to by "outstanding citizens"--certifying "they didn't hear Thomas J. Barrett on Oct. 4, 1894 remark to Mr. Rube Stafford that Azmon Murphey caused him to lose 200 white votes in Pike by preaching

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

social equality to the negroes."¹

Defending himself through a letter in the Journal, T. J. Barrett claimed an article written in Barnesville and published in the Atlanta Constitution had grossly misrepresented him. He protested that he had received a majority of 215 votes in the October election, but that the count "was done contrary to law and for the sole purpose of counting me out."² Concerning the social equality issue, the Populist candidate declared

. . . Col. A. A. Murphy . . . has been my friend during the whole campaign. He has made votes for me both white and black. This every democrat knows. I am sure that Col. Murphey has never made a social equality speech. I did not remark in Zebulon that Murphey had lost me while /sic/ votes, by preaching social equality, as quoted by your Barnesville correspondent, and there is not an honest democrat in Pike county that believes I made such a remark about Murphey, or that Murphey ever preached social equality to the negroes³

The Journal noted, next to Barrett's letter, that there were "affidavits to come from other side." But the matter was not taken up in succeeding issues of the newspaper.

The statewide publicity the county received from the social equality controversy as well as from the People's Party Paper's scandalous disclosures on the Pike election no doubt influenced the Journal editor's post-election call for a purified ballot box and a registration law for

¹
P. Journal, 11 October 1894.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid.

Pike County. Lee claimed a week after the election that "The great abuse of the elective franchise in the last election has caused good citizens to inquire, what can be done to purify the ballot box? This is the great need of the times."¹

Lee's idea of a fair registration law was the typical Southern Democrat's notion: members of the electorate (males of age) should be extended voting privileges only if they have paid a poll tax. The fact that the poll tax was an effective Southern device for eliminating much of the Black vote, and for safeguarding the 'solid South' Democratic hegemony, sheds light on the Journal editor's assertion that

. . . Some of our populist friends seem to think it is a free ballot that we need, but this is not true, if we are to understand from their recent conduct what they mean by a 'free ballot'. They seem to think it is the privilege of all men to vote whether they have paid their tax or not--vote 'free', that's it. Now if /sic/ they want that sort of a free ballot, we have too much of it.²

Lee's message in behalf of Southern Democrats becomes transparent enough, as he asserted, " . . . The democratic party is the only party of the people and in favor of fair, legal elections. It is in favor of a majority rule. . . ."³ Giving his proposal more weight by calling for the Georgia Assembly to legislate in Pike's behalf, the Journal editor ceremoniously declared, " . . . to the end that these fundamental principles of democracy may be more rigidly guarded in the future we print

1

P. Journal, 12 October 1894.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

a legal notice this week asking the next General Assembly to pass a registration law for Pike County. . . ."¹ Claiming such a law would give latitude for chicanery and humbug, Lee concluded, "We hope that those of our populist friends who are in favor of fair methods in elections will join us in this petition for registration law."²

Further research is needed to determine what became of Pike's proposed registration law. For apparently the Journal turned rather abruptly from the abuses of the October election to the battle for the Democrats in the upcoming November 4th congressional elections. The incendiary appeal used by the Democratic Journal ~~paled however in the perhaps~~ anti-climactic congressional fight. The newspaper simply declared that

Hon. Charles L. Bartlett will be elected to Congress, with or without a majority from Pike county, but Pike must stand by him. We want to see a little glory given the county--and a nice majority for Bartlett will do it.³

The Journal also turned its attention to Tom Watson's ongoing congressional campaign in Georgia's "Terrible Tenth," where Populist majorities were polled in October. On October 11th Lee declared "The democrats on the Tenth think they are sure to beat Tom Watson with that peerless statesman Maj. J.C.C. Black and Georgia will rejoice if such is the result when the sun goes down on the sixth day of November."⁴ In another

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

P. Journal, 18 October 1894.

4

P. Journal, 11 October 1894.

pre-election editorial, Lee vehemently attacked Watson and solemnly warned his supporters that

Tom Watson has done more harm to Ga. in the last few years than all the other bad influences put together. He is carrying his followers to a bad end as fast as he can and they ill realize it when it is probably too late. We hope for his overwhelming defeat by Congressman Black.¹

Though the Journal seemed to turn aside from the abuses of the October election, the People's Party Paper concentrated on exposing Democratic fraud committed during that election. The Populist paper indicated that Democratic abuses were rampant in Pike and in surrounding counties as well. In quoting the Democratic press on the election, the Populist organ called attention to the Griffin News' "innocent" remark to the effect that "The democratic workers of Griffin took the admonition of the News and Sun literally and not only voted themselves but voted everything else that came in sight."²

In November the People's Party Paper provided a forum for the Populists of nearby Butts County, where Populist candidate for representative J. Hart McAichae was contesting the election of Hon. Thomas J. Dempsey. The Butts Populists charged there had been in the election corruption of all sorts: "buying votes, use of whiskey, bulldozing."³ According to their report, "The democrats of no other county in the state ever equalled

1

P. Journal, 18 October 1894.

2

People's Party Paper, 13 October 1894.

3

People's Party Paper, 9 November 1894.

the work of the democratic organization of Butts county."¹ In listing "examples of rascality", these Populists noted that in their 'dry' county and in the 'dry' town of Jackson

. . . a number of witnesses saw prominent democrats in various precincts in county give voters whiskey and several witnesses 'swore that they were offered or were given whiskey by democratic workers.'²

The Butts Populists furthermore contended that

/It was/ proven that a lawyer, prominent church member claims 'to have received the second blessing', gave voters whiskey on election day. . . .³

They asserted that "The democratic authorities in this county compiled for the use of the managers--democratic managers--what they called a defaulters list and then refused to let the parties whose names were on the list to vote /sic/, even upon taking the oath unless they produced their tax receipts."⁴

The intensive, corrupt methods used by the Democrats to defeat the Populists in Pike and neighboring counties is an indication of Populism's holding power in these counties at the time of the 1894 elections. Another important indicator is the fact that Pike, in the wake of the contested October election, voted against the Democratic congressional

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

Ibid.

4

Ibid.

candidate in the November election. The Journal lamented that "Pike county was the only county in the Sixth district that went against Bartlett and Pike must elect her democratic officers in January to redeem herself."¹

In the November congressional election in Tom Watson's district an even more extensive use of 1892 methods---violence, corruption of the Black vote, ballot-box stuffing, bribery--gave an obviously illegal victory to Watson's Democratic opponents, Major Black. A special runoff election was demanded by the Populists.²

By the end of 1894 a new state registration law resembling later Southern disfranchisement laws was passed. The law, by which Democrats would control the Black vote in Georgia, gave a registration committee of three in each county absolute power to draw up lists of qualified voters. It was a law which would be used to help defeat Tom Watson in the Tenth District.³

The fateful year, 1894, closed in the Pike area with a devastating cyclone at the turbulent scene of Populist entrenchment and mob violence, Forsyth, Monroe county.⁴

1

P. Journal, 15 November 1894.

2

Woodward, Tom Watson, pp. 269-70.

3

Ibid., p. 276.

4

P. Journal, 12 December 1894; 14 December 1894.

CHAPTER IX

MORAL DEFEAT: A GENERATION'S TURNING POINT, THE END OF POPULISM IN PIKE COUNTY 1895-1896

In February of the New Year 1895, a raging blizzard struck in the Pike area. Cries of "Pity the Poor", "Help the Poor" arose in the suffering which resulted when temperatures dropped to eight degrees above zero.¹ A citizens' relief committee was formed at Griffin which claimed to have given relief to 1,200 persons a week after the devastating storm struck.² It is not clear to what degree Blacks of the immediate area suffered in the weather disaster, but in nearby Harris county a race riot threatened in the wake of the extreme cold. In that county Blacks hungry for meat rose up to try to force whites to share the meat in white storehouses. The Blacks burned the military depot, destroying almost all the arms and ammunition. And although the Griffin News report was sketchy, it appeared by February 21st that Governor Atkinson had been alerted and was standing by to "render prompt assistance in the case of an outbreak," as whites in that county feared it was only the beginning of trouble.³

That January the Journal had rejoiced over the announcement, in an

¹
Griffin News, 13 February 1895.

²
Griffin News, 17 February 1895.

³
Griffin News, 21 February 1895.

article entitled "Pike Redeemed", that the full Democratic ticket for county officers had been elected. The local newspaper jubilantly declared, "We have asserted all the time that Pike was a democratic county, and this election simply verified our statement."¹

As there is at present a lack of other source material on this election in Pike, it is impossible to know the facts behind the Democratic newspaper's observation that where the January election was concerned,

In Barnesville, we never saw better work done. The contest was an interesting one. A few days before the election the democrats became thoroughly aroused, and they got down to work right.²

But it had apparently been an intense struggle. And at the polls at Concord in Pike a murder occurred. A white Democrat was killed by a white Populist in a "quarrel" over the Pike election.³ According to the News report, "Pink Smith was shot twice by Joe Johnson . . . both /were/ men of family, Smith leaving a wife and two children, the youngest a babe only five days old."⁴

The Griffin News further reported that "Monroe downed the Populist ticket in good fashion, giving the splendid Democratic majority of 600."⁵ There is considerable evidence, however, that Populism was far from

¹
P. Journal, 10 January 1895.

²
Ibid.

³
Griffin News, 3 January 1895.

⁴
Ibid.

⁵
Ibid.

defeated in that county and in Pike.

By the spring season, one more Black, Amor Gibson, became the fourth grim statistic in Populist enclave Monroe's wave of racial brutality. Gibson was lynched on a rape charge at Forsyth.

In August the Griffin News reported grim news on Blacks in the Populist banner district around Paris, Texas, where the gruesome torture burning of Henry Smith in that area's lynching epidemic had shocked the world in 1893. By August of 1895, Blacks of that area had been run off their lands probably by "white caps" (the Ku Klux Klan).² And apparently white Populists of the area had been severely threatened for any interference in the matter. And according to the News report,

Posted notices . . . throughout Delta county, to Negroes, threatening them with lynching if they did not leave the county immediately, have caused a stampede, notwithstanding the dissuasion of good citizens, whom /sic/ it might be added, were threatened with death by these notices if they interfered.³

¹N.A.A.C.P., Thirty Years of Lynching, p. 58.

²Griffin News, 8 August 1895.

³Ibid.

The Blacks' fertile lands were consequently idle, 'Feeling was running high," according to the News, "over the outrage, and the best element of the county deplore the outrage."¹ The Pike area newspaper report on the Texas action concluded, "It is believed that the whole scheme was got up to rob the negroes of their property."²

In the same month of the grim news from Texas, some 1,500 Populists assembled at Pike to hear the Honorable C. H. Ellington and Honorable James Barrett speak. The speeches of these "Two grand champions of patriotism, of Americanism, of Populism" were followed by speeches of local Pike partisans, one of whom advanced a Democratic fusion "middle of the road" position.³

In the special 1895 election resulting from the vicious corruption of the Watson-Black contest of 1894, the new anti-Negro Democratic registration practices helped defeat the Populist apostle. The Griffin News headline, accompanied by an illustration of a giant crowing rooster declared,

Black Wins--Populism Dead in Georgia--Two Thousand Democratic Majority in the Tenth--The Red-Headed Boy of McDuffie Has His Wings Clipped--And Will Play Angel No More to the Credulous Populists--A Quiet Election and a Light Vote Polled.⁴

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

People's Party Paper, 16 August 1895.

4

Griffin News, 3 October 1895.

In 1895 it became clear that the breach between the prodigal son Populists and the Democrats could be healed through fusion around one issue in particular: silver coinage--mammon. A Pike Journal editorial in June of 1895 called for a meeting of friends of free coinage. Not long thereafter a celebrated event, the Bimetallic League Convention occurred in nearby Griffin. According to reports of the Atlanta Constitution and the People's Party Paper, Populists were invited to this convention and turned out in considerable numbers, but the majority of delegates were Democrats. With a desire for rapprochement afloat, the Democrats were reported to have had a conciliatory attitude at the convention in that

One ardent Democrat from Pike County, who evidently failed to appreciate the full purpose of the Organization, raised an objection to admitting the prodigal sons, but he was quickly 'squelched'.¹

The same convention denounced the Cleveland administration in terms almost as strong as Populists' and it had called on people to spread the league to every community and bring pressure on politicians.²

While the League flourished via demands for primaries to select delegates to similar state and national conventions, Tom Watson underscored his basic mistrust of all fusion efforts by reminding Populists that when the "Alliance lamb agreed to lie down with the Democratic lion," the result was "lamb soon dissolved in gastric juices of said lion."³ Watson

¹

Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 189.

²

Ibid.

³

People's Party Paper, 16 July 1895.

took a dim view of the Griffin Convention; he claimed that

The Populists who were lured into the meeting went away with the dry grins. It was dinned into their ears that the meeting was a nonpartisan affair, a meeting into which no politics would be admitted. This made the Populists feel good, but when the time came to make up committees, the Populists looked a little foolish, as not a member of their party appeared on the committee on program. . . .¹

Concluding that it looked as if they might have struck some of the Populists by accident, Watson said

. . . But we are glad this convention was held; glad our men went there; glad we showed a willingness to harmonize on principle; glad the meeting failed through the greed and insincerity of the professional wire-pullers and not through the fault of the Populists.²

A significant conclusion to 1895 occurred when Spalding voters approved Local Option and that adjoining Pike area county went "dry." Blacks were apparently prominent in the prohibition effort, and the Griffin News reported in November that "Quite a number of citizens of Africa district /Blacks/, supplemented by others residing elsewhere" met at a Spalding church to endorse the "good results" of prohibition in that county's economic life. At the meeting a Dr. W. G. Woodbridge, in an "impromptu speech" also held that

the people in their sovereign capacity as voters, have a right to exact of their servants--the officeholders--the enforcement of law. If persons now holding office do not carry out the law, the people in the next election should . . . vote for me who will.³

1

Ibid.

2

Ibid.

3

Griffin News, 22 November 1895.

In 1896, the year the Populist Party emerged as a third party nationwide, Tom Watson in a somewhat confused set of circumstances, agreed to try and save intact his own party and the Democratic Party through his nomination to the second place on a fusion presidential ticket with Democrat William Jennings Bryan. Although the Democrats had incorporated many traditionally Populist reform measures in their platform and the Watson compromise was forged in the Democratic convention, Bryan and regional blocs of Democrats would reject Watson's hard-fought candidacy in favor of national banker Sewell, and Watson's 1896 crusade would reportedly drive him close to insanity.¹

On the state level, Georgia Republicans passed the McKinley slate in state convention, seven-eighths of whose delegates were Blacks; it was called a "howling mob" by the Atlanta Constitution.² And as Georgia Democrats incorporated Populist-inspired reforms in their 1896 platform and in their 1895 legislative program--including provision for a school-book commission to select uniform textbooks for Georgia--the Populists annexed a plank calling for statewide prohibition, a measure under consideration since Alliance days.³

In Pike county a Pike County Journal editorial which reported that the Populists were trying to fuse with the prohibitionists noted, "The Populists have a plank in their platform favoring the purchase of school

¹
Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 331.

²
Atlanta Constitution, quoted in Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 192.

³
Arnett, Populist Movement, pp. 192, 207.

books for children 'both white and colored'. . . ."1 The same editorial referred to issues of legality and procedure, such as ". . . . Whether the books could be torn up and new ones provided by the state any day."2

Two months before, the Pike newspaper had declared it was glad Populists were returning to the fold, and had noted 'Hon. Thomas E. Watson is called 'a reformed lawyer' by the populist press. The last estate of that man is worst than the first.'3

By 1896 Georgia Democrats had thoroughly co-opted Populism's cause of free silver. The Griffin News declared at the time of the June 1896 Democratic primaries, 'Free Silver Carries the Day With A Whirl . . . State Democracy Endorses the Griffin Convention.'4

Also a portentous occurrence at the time of the Democratic primaries involved companies of soldiers, convened for the fifth annual state military encampment at Griffin, arriving at neighboring Forsyth.5 Though the News portrayed the subsequent Forsyth 'rendez-vous' of the soldiers with the Quitman guards as a colorful military parade, it should be remembered that two years before at this Populist center, lynch mob stronghold, Quitman guards had been the focus of a near race riot.

1
P. Journal, 28 August 1896.

2
Ibid.

3
P. Journal, 26 June 1896.

4
Griffin News, 26 June 1896.

5
Griffin News, 9 June 1896.

Also by the time of the primaries Pike's economic condition appeared more hopeful. The report from Concord Pike, where the year before a Democrat had been killed by a Populist in the election, was that

. . . Wheat is being thrashed and is turning out splendid /although there/ was only a small acreage sown . . . The oat crop is about harvested and made a better yield than expected.

. . . The rain put a move on corn and it is growing at a rate of about three inches a day and cotton moving up one inch a day.¹

The report concluded on Pike Democrats' full-silver primary ticket, "The free silver men run /sic/ a good race."²

In July the Griffin News focused extensively on the emergence of the Populist party as a nationwide third party. By July Watson's national exposure had apparently added fuel to the Populist cause in Pike. A Populist in the Pike congressional district, for example, stressed in the Griffin Evening News, that the Populists could probably elect a Congressman from the district and carry Pike in the process.³ The local Populist further noted that Pike's Colonel A. A. Murphy was being suggested for the Populist congressional nominee and Populist Thomas Barrett was being suggested for State Senator. The News also concluded concerning Barrett that although he had "been reported dead several weeks," he was still alive after a dangerous illness. But, according to the News, "he is still too dead to beat Mr. Berner /the Democrat/."⁴

¹ Griffin News, 11 June 1896.

² Ibid.

³ Evening News, quoted in the Griffin News, 1 July 1896.

⁴ Griffin News, 1 July 1896.

By August a News headline declared, "Pops Are Rattled--By the Energy Shown By Spalding Democrats." According to the News, before the occurrence of an energetic Democratic rally, "the Populists had occupied the street corners for days and filled the town with a noise like the buzzing of many flies and every fly they had counted for a vote. . . ."1

In 1896 Pike area Blacks withdrew their allegiance to Populism and returned to the Republican fold, from which position they endorsed Democratic candidates. At a packed Griffin courthouse meeting in September, Blacks, termed "Republicans of the Sixth District by the Griffin News, endorsed Governor Atkinson's candidacy and were unexhaustedly praised by the Griffin newspaper as a "crowd consisting of the best element of colored voters." Also the News exulted that the convention of Blacks "gave the marble heart to Azmon Murphey's /Populist/ candidacy."2 At the meeting a Black from Macon, R. D. Locke, made a speech on the tariff, which the News declared "was listened to with some impatience by his colored audience." And as a final footnote to the era of Black Populism, one of the Cowings family, which had by 1896 all but disappeared in Pike's tax digest records, stood up in this meeting of several hours to repudiate Populism in Pike. According to the News, "A. C. Cowan, the colored leader of the Pike /Republican/ delegation, said the Pike county negroes were all down on Murphey and would not vote for him."3

1

Griffin News, 30 August 1896.

2

Griffin News, 22 September 1896.

3

Ibid.

About the time of the Black Republican meeting at Spalding, a Black Populist "orator" from Atlanta, Reverend A. Graves, was unable to draw a crowd at Griffin. The News concluded "This is one of the strongest indications yet seen of the waning of the Populist cause . . . /as/ at night . . . the colored population is at leisure and anxious for any diversion."¹

In September the Griffin newspaper noted that a Democratic Executive Committee, "desirous of a proper, legal, fairly conducted election," had decided that the Democratic committee of each militia district would be present at the polls and a sworn manager would represent the Democrats at the polls. The Committee expressed willingness for a Populist manager to be appointed in each militia district.²

Shortly before the election the Griffin News advertised Populist liquor-bribing of Georgia Blacks in a meeting in which the ex-president of Tom Watson's alma mater, Mercer University, shared a platform at Columbus with "Tom Watson's first lieutenant" Reverend Doyle. At that meeting of some 300 to 400 Blacks, Mercer's ex-president Dr. J. B. Gambrell of Macon reportedly offended prohibitionist sentiments in his reply to a question posed by a Methodist pastor, the Reverend Allison (apparently a Black). Allison had made a "straightout prohibition talk" and was shocked that Gambrell took a stand favoring better whiskey for Blacks through a scheme of legal whiskey dispensary distribution. The Reverend Allison, according to the News, expressed shock "that Dr. Gambrell should appeal to the negro vote on the ground that they could get purer and cheaper

¹

Griffin News, 24 September 1896.

²

Griffin News, 30 September 1896.

whiskey" through dispensary legislation.¹ Gambrell, in answering one Black's question on buying a quart of dispensary whiskey for purposes of getting drunk, furthermore declared that while that would not be allowed under the dispensary scheme, "one can get /the quart/ to drink--to make him feel good or to set 'em up to his friends." According to the News, Mercer's ex-president concluded that "in his heart he was a prohibitionist," and desired to see "liquor wiped off the face of the earth, but the platform of the /Populist/ party did not call for this."² The Griffin News report of this remarkable meeting concluded, "After the speaking the negroes repaired to a rendez-vous near by /sic/, where they were supplied with liquor by the Populists."³

In the election of 1896, Populists polled 42.75 percent of the total vote in Pike, 39.22 percent of the Monroe vote, and only 18.84 percent of the vote in Spalding.⁴

In the election of 1896 the Democrats and Populists were defeated nationally by a Republican machine lubricated by between \$4,000,000 and \$6,000,000 in campaign contributions, \$250,000 of which came from the Standard Oil Company.⁵

¹
Griffin News, 3 October 1896.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid.

⁴
Gaither, Blacks and Populist Revolt, p. 171.

⁵
Arnett, Populist Movement, pp. 210-11.

Concerning Georgia's 1896 state elections, it was noted that the "same kind of irregularities, corruptions, and frauds were practiced with apparently little or no abatement."¹ And though the national elections of November were said to have shattered party lines in the nation as never before since the Civil War in Georgia,

The bitter political dispute, the desire to rebuke the local Democracy, and doubtless in some cases the scramble for offices tended . . . to overshadow the national issues.²

Most Watsonites did not vote in the election--the total Georgia vote being 58,000 smaller than in 1892.³ After the ordeal of persecution that characterized Watson's treatment in the 1896 national race, Tom Watson went into political seclusion for eight years.⁴

1

Ibid., p. 209.

2

Ibid., p. 210.

3

Ibid.

4

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 332.

EPILOGUE

The year 1896, according to C. Vann Woodward, marked agrarian provincialism's "last aggressive stand against capitalist industrialism," although Populism was revived in the West to some degree in Progressivism, and it continued to be a force in local elections in the nation until 1908.¹ By 1904 Tom Watson was put forth as the Populist presidential candidate and on the state level he had become a staunch supporter of Black disfranchisement--which became a grim reality in 1906. In the turbulent state campaign and election of 1904, Democrat Hoke Smith became Governor and the Democrats incorporated into law numerous Populist-inspired reform measures, including the abolishment of the convict lease system.

The defeat of Populism in 1896 clearly marked a turning point in Tom Watson's life-- as after 1896 a reactionary current began to characterize Georgia politics and a new era of Southern-Northern rapprochement was reached in the Spanish American war, Tom Watson and the post-civil war generation he symbolized apparently grew further away from the racial iconoclasm of their youth and post-war formation, and became more fixed in the violently reactionary anti-Black mentality of the emerging era.

In 1895 the future course of Southern Blacks' more 'internalized', education and religion-directed survival efforts was foreshadowed in Booker T. Washington's famous "Atlanta Compromise" Cotton States

1

Woodward, Tom Watson, p. 331.

Exposition speech. And in 1896, the year that the Supreme Court decision *Plessy vs. Ferguson* upheld legalized segregation on public transportation, Harvard graduate William E. B. DuBois joined Atlanta University's faculty, from which point he would begin a lifelong crusade for Black rights.

The ascendancy of capitalist industrialism and codified racism after Populism's defeat in 1896 was marked by the lifting of the Nineties depression through the discovery of gold in Alaska in 1897, and through especially the resort to the war of imperialism against Spain in 1898. With the preponderant new economic system, the credo of materialism became entrenched in the 1900's Progressive era. The catholic new industrial system, advanced by unprecedented scientific technological advances, fostered the replacement of nineteenth century Bible-centered authority in learning with a social credo derived from the anthropological theories of Charles Darwin.

By the time of the late nineteenth century, conservative Darwinism, which stressed heredity and natural selection, "was standard doctrine in thousands of American pulpits, universities and newspaper offices."¹ On the other hand, reform Darwinism's emphasis on the environment, stressed by Henry George's 1879 bestseller Progress and Poverty and other proponents, would be focal to the movement in Northern cities to "engineer" society using the naissant social sciences.²

On the local scene in 1896, the same year in which Black Henry Milner

¹
Golden, p. 71.

²
Ibid., pp. 73-76.

was lynched at Griffin, Pike's sheriff Gwyn was assassinated by the Taylor Delk gang at Concord Pike. The Pike County Journal decried the "terrible tragedy" and urged the State of Georgia to offer a reward of not less than \$5,000 for the "three dastardly villains."¹ This same year, 1896, which had seen the Journal converted into a partnership of Parry Lee and H. W. Maples, witnessed in December the retirement of Journal editor Parry Lee.² More research would be needed, however, to determine what change in the Journal might have been affected by Lee's replacement, Sid Green.

In 1898, on the eve of the Spanish American war, the Barnesville Gazette noted that Tom Watson had been engaged in Pike as the leading council in the defense of Tom Langford, charged for complicity in the murder of Pike's sheriff Gwyn. Tom Delk had already been hanged for the murder and old man Taylor Delk was serving out a life sentence in the penitentiary when Watson began Lanford's defense with the assistance of S. N. Woodward of Barnesville and M. D. Domineck of Zebulon.³

A month after the Gazette reported on Watson's defense of Langford, that newspaper, cited some years before by Watson's People's Party Paper as an arch-enemy of Populism, noted concerning Tom Watson's retirement that

/Watson/ is a man of ability, a shrewd leader, an orator, and stump speaker without a superior, and withal, after we

¹
P. Journal, 10 April 1896.

²
P. Journal, 3 January 1896; 4 December 1896.

³
Barnesville Gazette, 10 February 1898.

come to consider him after the heat of the campaign has passed away, we conclude that he has been sincere and honest in the position which he has occupied as the head of the populist /sic/ party.

What his future will be cannot be now determined, but we believe that Tom Watson will be an influence for good in Georgia.¹

In 1898 the price of cotton rose and some degree of farm prosperity was on the horizon. An 1898 Barnesville Gazette headline cautioned, however, that "Farmers Should Not Be Fooled--Sudden Rise in Cotton Price is Only a Snare . . . Commissioner of Agriculture Exposes the Old Game That is Being Played to Induce Planting of a Big Crop. An Appeal for Diversification and Smaller Area."² During the Spanish American war, prices did indeed begin to move upward on farm products; by 1900 a Georgia newspaper declared, "God is surely smiling on this country."³ Prosperity was also in evidence in Barnesville's cotton factory industry, as the Gazette noted in 1898 that since the first cotton mill had been built there in 1890 with a capital of \$75,000, the capital of that company had increased to \$150,000. And by 1898 the J. C. Collier Company was making arrangements to erect Barnesville's third underwear mills.⁴

A significant feature of the war between the United States and Spain was the fact that Griffin's Camp Northern became a point of mobilization

1

Barnesville Gazette, 17 March 1898.

2

Barnesville Gazette, 10 March 1898.

3

Moultrie Observer, quoted in Range, Georgia Agriculture, p. 169.

4

Barnesville Gazette, 17 March 1898.

for Georgia volunteer troops. And although it is not clear whether the active military presence influenced the demise of crime in neighboring Pike county, it should be noted that almost at the same time the camp took this rôle on, Griffin's Morning Call announced cryptically that "crime has greatly decreased in Pike."¹ Also, as has been noted, the war brought about the end of the blockade of the mail to neighboring Meriwether county, where whites were embroiled in an effort to burn out and run out of office a recent Black Republican postmaster appointee.

In the Pike area and throughout Georgia, Black troops became a major concern in the new violently racist era. In 1898 the Griffin Morning Call quoted the Savannah News to the effect that

. . . the negro troops have shown a lawless spirit wherever they have been in camp near towns . . . It is probable that they would make satisfactory soldiers if they could be kept away from the towns, and were officered by white men. The negroes, however, object to having negro volunteers officered by white men, and, owing to political ransom probably, the volunteer negro regiments and companies have been allowed to choose officers of their own color. Negro officers are not well received in the army. Neither the white officers nor the white privates will salute them . . . We suggested some time ago that the negro troops . . . be sent to Cuba to garrison duty. There is no doubt that they can stand the Cuban climate much better . . . only a few negro troops with Gen. Shafter's army have suffered from fever. . . .²

Also in 1898 the Barnesville Gazette noted concerning Saturday night talks at a Barnesville barber shop that the "war is the general topic and the negro is always discussed as the first ones /sic/ to be sent and if they can't whip the Spaniards then the white folks will go down /sic/."

1

Griffin Morning Call, 14 April 1898.

2

Savannah News, quoted in the Griffin Morning Call, 18 August 1898.

The Gazette furthermore quoted bootblack Ellis Johnson as having said the "best thing yet" concerning the war; according to Johnson, " 'You white folks are fixing to lose these here United States if you send us niggers down to Cuba to fight; when the shooting begins niggers will swim across to Florida like dogs.'"¹

Also, although it is not clear what might have been the effect of this new war on Pike's grim 1890's opium and morphine problems, it should be noted that the post-Populist era saw the ascendancy of temperance forces in the state. In a "general wave of reform," a law was passed prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages in the state. And Georgia moved in the direction which helped institute prohibition as the law of land through the Eighteenth Amendment.²

The 1890's decade of radical change in Pike county closed on a grim note foretelling the coming of the ominous 'jim crow' era. In one year alone, 1900, three Blacks were struck down by white lynch mob brutality in Pike. On June 27, 1900 Jordan Hines was killed for "an unknown offense" at Molena, Pike, the town which only a short time before had been the home of the Black Populist Cowings family and had in 1893 been consummately ravaged by a cyclone. And on October 24, 1900, on a charge of "race prejudice", James Guer and James Caleaway fell to a white mob at Liberty Hill, Pike county.³

¹
Barnesville Gazette, 17 March 1898.

²
Arnett, Populist Movement, p. 222.

³
N.A.A.C.P., Thirty Years of Lynching, p. 59.

Pike County, Georgia's direction was typical of a change which came over all the South in the wake of Populism's 1896 defeat. In the words of Ray Stannard Baker, "By the early years of the twentieth century the capitulation of the South to extreme racism was virtually complete, in part because of the steady erosion of indigenous restraints . . . since Reconstruction. . . ."1 The new era would be "marked by the completion of the Negro's political proscription in the South, the erection of an elaborate structure of Jim Crow legislation . . . and the perpetuation and even worsening pattern of violence and brutality in the treatment of Southern Negroes."2

1

Ray Stannard Baker, Following the Color Line (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), p. vi. /originally published in 1908 by Doubleday, Page and Company/.

2

Ibid., p. v.

CONCLUSION

The profound drama of the races which unfolded in Pike County, Georgia in the 1890's Populist era is one story of the violently climactic end of the post Civil war period in Georgia and the South. The story detailed one chapter of the last political insurgency of Georgia's war-wrecked farmers against the ascendant mercantile corporate system of the modern era. It detailed the epic record of the devastated war generation and society in the South on the edge of cataclysmic change and about to erase the last evidence of a fragile vein of racial tolerance, born apparently of the experience of holocaust.

The generation of Blacks and whites which came to maturity in Georgia during the 1890's had been seasoned by some of the worst conditions which have ever prevailed for any period of time on the North American continent. Georgia was more ravaged by war than any of the Southern states. The Civil War and the turbulent post-bellum period brought about the near demise of the class of Georgia planters which had before the war enjoyed such social, political, and economic pre-eminence through the bloody, chain-wrapped hand of slavery. The post-war farm tenancy system was evolved amid severe labor shortages and cotton's plummeting price. Since land as collateral was seen as a drug on the financial market, Georgia farmers came into a state of almost hopeless peonage to town merchants, who could procure bank loans. Also taxes were proportionately higher for the farmers and railroad rates discriminated against Southern farmers.

The politics of post-war Georgia were as turbulent as the economics.

Reconstruction and federal bayonets had brought the ex-slaves into political office. But as the nation faced its first devastating period of depression as a rapidly industrializing economy, the South fought back Reconstruction with outlawed Ku Klux Klan terror tactics, riots, black lists, and intimidation of all descriptions against Blacks. Blacks were effectively disfranchised for a period and the racist Democratic "solid South" order became ubiquitous. Yet the unstable times of the aftermath of the holocaust apparently produced individual whites in Georgia and the Pike area who varied from class norms and exhibited unusual racial tolerance and non-conformist political antagonism towards the oppressive Bourbon "solid South" oligarchy.

In the terrible pressures of the post-Reconstruction period, the church became the focus of Blacks' painstaking social and educational progress. Also in the case example of the Pike area, religion proved a mitigating force in tempering public opinion on race in the Democratic press, until white religious leadership began to falter with the severe economic depression of the 1890's and the cataclysmic weather disasters of the period. And in 1893 the "dike" of racial liberalism was broken in Pike county and racial violence and repression ensued. There is evidence that in the Pike area religion provided occasions for truly interracial cooperation and continued even late in the period to spark racially liberal prohibitionist movement efforts. There is also some evidence that the Black church continued to be the most dependable institution of Blacks' survival in the Pike area disasters, as the church was the mainstay of Black social uplift and education throughout post-war Georgia. But white survival efforts seemed more focused on dramatic

political efforts and insurgency movements during the period.

The role of Blacks in the evolution of the Pike post-war political insurgency movements, climaxing in Populism, reflected how complex was the evolution of the "jim crow" era out of the slave period and the convulsive society of the holocaust's aftermath. From their "apogee" of acceptance and integration in the Populist precursor 1880's prohibition movement, to their apparent neglect in the Farmer's Alliance movement and their segregation and tolerance in the morally insufficient Populist movement, Blacks became the victims of the "maturation" of the post-war, iconoclast white generation once prosperity seemed assured and the healing of the North and South white 'brotherhood' seemed imminent through the Spanish American War.

Furthermore, the acquiescence of post-war white liberals to racism--symbolized in the 1890's development of the Pike County Journal editor, the Griffin News' drastic 1890's metamorphosis, and the capitulation of Populists like Tom Watson--was perhaps an even more ominous sign than the 1890's lynchings and race riots that bitter times lay ahead for Blacks. But in addition to the sad 1890's resolution of Blacks' fate, the whole world as nineteenth century men had known it was dissolving--the mainstay of farm life, purely Bible religion, more personalized interpersonal contacts were disappearing.

Still the all too brief record nevertheless remains of the humanness of two Pike area newspapers in the post-Reconstruction "madness" concerning race. And the record remains of some Georgia Blacks who when thwarted in redress of their pressing grievances by the mainstream Populist revolt, used the "spirit" of People's Party revolt to fuel their

own vital, independent political outcries. And though the darkness of disfranchisement and terror falling on the race must have washed over Blacks like the mortifying cold breath of slavery, 1890's independent Black outcries foreshadowed the approaching hour of trial for the race-- in which the teachers and preachers of the race would not falter.

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