

Pi Gamma Mu Centennial History :

The Winfield, Kansas into which the Honor Society was Born

Winfield, Kansas is the historic and continuing headquarters of Pi Gamma Mu, one of the preeminent social science honor societies in North America dating back to 1924. Winfield, Kansas is also the historic headquarters and center for the 1890s Populism of the farming Midwest and *myne own sinful* farming South. Along with the fine history of Pi Gamma Mu produced by longtime trustee and college leader Dr. Clara Smalls, this one hundredth volume of ISSR seems a good place to review the setting in which our social-science honor society came into being.

Given current popular understanding and common usage of the term *populism*—associated as it is with Donald John Trump and with red MAGA hats. and with the people who speak obscenities about immigrants and who physically assailed our capitol building in D.C—readers (and Pi Gamma Mu honorary members) may expect a *mea culpa*, even *mea maxima culpa*. But no. I am as honored to be associated with the 1890s Populism as I am with the academic society. And Pi Gamma Mu and Populism (at least of the Kansas strain) are one and the same.

As I often have to note, both Comer Vann Woodward (1908-1999) and George Brown Tindall (1921-2006) spoke about these things long before me—louder and with more footnotes. To commemorate the good works of Winfield folk and to understand the contribution of *fin de siècle* Kansans to our honorary society and to our polity, we must establish a geography of *mentallite*: First, there is wheat-belt and corn-raising Winfield, then a speech by an Arkansan in Florida's panhandle, then Georgia Populists, and then the most important student of Populism, the transplanted Roman Catholic New Yorker Walter Terry King Nugent (1935-2021) as he

manifested scholarship in Kansas's Protestant Winfield, in Kansas's Protestant Little Manhattan, and then back among his own religious who were studying at Notre Dame University alongside the banks of the Roman Catholic South Bend of the St. Joseph's River in Indiana.¹ Lastly, there will be some value judgments, not only about the honor society but also about midwestern as opposed to the southern piedmont Populism.

In 1885, Methodist farmers and local merchants in Winfield established Southwestern College, which began awarding degrees in 1889. This coincided with the height of farming reformism, the Northern Alliance precursors of Populism, The college population (and the locals) were always a combination of the most sincere Methodist good-works with the latent abolitionism of Jayhawk Kansas farmers who allowed a few thousand freed Black people to farm in their territory and then fought with guns to free some four million Blacks still in slavery. These Kansans professed such antislavery loudly and long before the Emancipator Abraham Lincoln and his generals finally accomplished the thirteenth amendment—and also held the nation together through sanguinary civil war. Kansas Populism sprang from these sources: Abolitionism, evangelical Protestantism (especially the Methodist sect), sincere college students, and plain spoken *Plain Folk* among the farming populace. The Town of Winfield supplied a major print outlet called *Winfield Industrial Free Press*, an organ for the Alliance and then the Populists to record the activities of the Alliance and the Populist farmers, students, and professors and also to broadcast their beliefs. Fortunately, today's *The Winfield Free Press* and the Kansas Historical Society both maintain archives of 1890s Populist literature—and both archives are available in full online.²

Old abolitionist-Republicans unhappy with the business-oriented and very urban (and urbane) GOP of Benjamin Harrison (U.S. president, 1889-1903), these Kansans never

relinquished their idealistic abolitionism nor their early support for “Woman Suffrage,” and they were also hostile to the pro-bank and racist Democrats led by Grover Cleveland (U.S president, 1885-1889; 1893-1897). They rapidly evolved from dissidents inside-the-GOP tent to an outside political force willing to “fuse” with the disdained Democrats in order to find a modicum of justice for former slaves, newly arrived Roman Catholic Irish folk, Germans of all sects, and the midwestern women who had created not only The Woman Suffrage Movement but also “radical immediatist” antislavery.³

Before long, they were their own political party, one that briefly but memorably dominated Kansas—and whose members so infuriated the conservative Kansas journalist William Allen White (1868-1944) that he wrote his most famous editorial, “What’s the Matter with Kansas?” It is a screed whose racism and anti-Semitism and misogyny somehow gets lost in our retelling. White, otherwise renowned for his temperate language and fairness, apparently later regretted excesses of language (the anti-Semitism and racism and the misogyny) in his 1896 editorial. Nevertheless, it brought him to instant fame and is often performed by dramatists today who retain the sarcasm but clean up (by clearing out) the more blatantly bigoted parts. The summer 1896 editorial was produced in the immediate aftermath of an encounter on the streets of Emporia, Kansas with Populists whose farming-dress and country expressions offended the more bourgeois sophisticate. The editorial foreshadows what happens to the Populists, viz., the racist and anti-Semitic and misogynistic opponents of Populism describe the egalitarian and feminist and abolitionist Populists as the “intolerant” and “prejudiced” ones—and even as ignorant and uneducated (though their college training and their credentials and their surviving writing show something of scientific knowledge as well as much of Methodist generosity of spirit). Between 1890 (the year of their historian John Donald Hicks’s birth!) and 1898, the Populists took over

the Kansas General Assembly, members posing in farmer-garb of the kind that offended editor White—complete with pitchforks. They enacted a number of reforms, most of which were struck down on appeal to the US Supreme Court and lower and lesser courts, and then they lost elections in 1896 and 1898. Before the twentieth-century, they disappeared as a party, but remained evermore as Hicks’s “pregnant failure,” the minority protest party whose ideas were put into effect decades later by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁴

It that very decade of the New Deal, C. Vann Woodward spoke and wrote for a different honorary-society in 1938—for Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Florida—and therein said everything I hope to say (but that speech is not readily available to most people today). He also defended Populism among academics and intellectuals—really defended Populism *from* attacks by both groups—in some important essays preserved handsomely in essays reprinted in *The Burden of Southern History* and *American Counterpoint*. Moreover, Woodward insisted he was “the last living Populist,” a line I began to use for myself in my own American Civilization lectures after Woodward’s death in the previous century.⁵

When he spoke to the honor students of the University of Florida, the assistant professor was addressing students on a campus barely 38 miles from Ocala, the place where (Kansas) Northern Alliance, (white) Southern Alliance, and (southern) Colored Alliance politicians met to create the Populist Party and the place where they wrote their first manifesto, the Ocala Platform of documented grievances and proposed remedies. Too, he spoke as one who knew personally Arkansas Populists and who had worked in Georgia on behalf of New Deal programs inspired by the politically moribund but still-fleshed Populists. He also spoke to fellow professors and young scholars whose own parents and grandparents had actually voted Populist, many of them not only in Gainesville and Jacksonville but at Ocala. And he and those students were in all

senses material beneficiaries of New Deal programs in that very year. Populist evidence for the need of government relief was documented, and was, as he told his audience, “fact-encrusted.” Populists of the 1890s, like Woodward and his young charges, spoke against “unrestrained capitalism.” The session agreed this form of capitalism led the cheers for “risk and reward” that impoverished most while enriching a very few. He ticked off the “fact encrusted” grievances and then noted the proposed remedies, all rejected in 1890s but most enshrined in 1930s New Deal relief programs:

*Good and fertile farmland was bought up cheap by speculators, not all from London but it seemed that way to Kansans and Georgians. They then held the land out of production until they could realize a wonderful return on their investment. Populists wanted to ban such speculation on farmland by insisting that those buying farmland actually *farm the land* instead of swapping it around like stock futures. Like the historical Jesus whom they quoted as if a contemporary of their own, Alliance and Populist farmers disliked absentee landlords.

*Shipping corn and wheat and cotton (the speculators’ *commodities*, the farmers’ *life*) was expensive since freight haulers were northeastern-based monopolists. “Natural advantages” accruing to railroad companies who styled themselves “natural monopolies,” the freight charges included clever tricks such as “Pittsburgh Plus,” whereby the freight hauler added in the distance from the farmer to Pittsburgh (although the train did not make such a trip at all). Ocala farmers paid for 792 miles their cotton did not travel and Winfield farmers paid for no less than 1053 miles that their corn and wheat did not travel. Freight haulers did this throughout the farmland *because they could do it-a point of pride as much as a point of profit*. In 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt finally ended the practice by signing the Hepburn Act modifying interstate

commerce—but he did so only after the years of Populist activism and the guidance of South Carolina’s U.S. Senator Benjamin Ryan Tillman, a Populist who never left the Democratic Party.

*South or North, no farmer could do any planting without a “start-up loan,” and financial institutions, whether in New York, Geneva, Brussels, or the much-more resented London, charged high interest rates despite the fact that there was *deflation* (falling prices) and *real* interest rates (quoted interest rate minus inflation) were in fact *negative*. It was not only “usurious” in the Biblical term, but a clever way for financial institutions to foreclose on good farmland and hold it until its price rose. At the same time *Robber Baron* industrialists not only enjoyed low-interest and even negative-interest loans but they demanded and got cash in “kick backs” when they shipped implements to farmers. The farmers wanted state and federal regulations limiting interest rates and forbidding kickbacks—and they wanted to eliminate international speculation and interstate speculation on farmland by keeping banks within state lines—and certainly within the U.S.

*Briefly during Reconstruction, Colored Alliance men had been able to obtain low-interest loans from the U.S. Army and were paid interest on their hard-earned savings at Army-supported “postal savings banks,” but now all Populists, all races, could find no banking services in the countryside and small towns where they could safely deposit their money or otherwise meet local-business needs. They wanted a return to such financial *services, not now Army-supported but government-supported (both states and federal)

*The Yahoos and hicks and hayseeds whom Walter Allen White accosted on Emporia sidewalks had no elected representatives in the U.S. Senate. Instead rural-state U.S. Senators were as urban (and urbane) as their fellow-Solons from Manhattan or Philadelphia. The nature of voting produced this odd result in the most rural states. Voting in those days looked different

than it does today: Voters went to a public place, a feed-store or a church or a school, and put their ballots into marked boxes in front of neighbors—and creditors and Ku Klux Klanners (who were present but not in uniform so that they could tell who you were but you could not tell who they were). One's vote was quite obvious to the many onlookers who lurked menacingly about. And the menace was real—Kansas loans were “called in” by angry creditors and in the Southland Klansmen killed offending Blacks and their allied white Populist voters when dusk fell and the voting places closed. In Australia of that era, there was an innovation (not today credited properly to the Aussies) in which folk cast their votes in secret behind curtains, and Populists demanded the Australian Ballot for themselves. Another features of voting in the 1890s was that the State General Assembly did the voting for U.S. Senate. Two steps removed from voting for their US. Senators, Populists also demanded Direct Election of Senators.

*Communication about price changes, interest rates, freight charges, weather and suchlike was slow to arrive and inaccurate—this despite the existence of telegraph and telephone services used for instantaneous delivery of news to northeastern industrialists and financiers. Again, monopoly ownership of telegraph and telephone utilities worked for the Robber Barons and the detested English investor who had business news at their bedsides—but nothing like such fast and accurate communication was available in Winfield or Ocala. Populists demanded federal regulation of such telegraph/telephone and other communication utilities and the places they set up their services and the rates they charged.

*Because of constantly falling prices, farmers “bought dear and sold cheap,” whether borrowing money or simply buying production-inputs like feed, seed, ploughs, implements or insurance. Milton Friedman demonstrates that it was the gold standard rigorously in force in that day that caused the shrinking supply of money stock that he called the “great contraction.”

To remedy it, Populists wanted to use silver as well as gold, that is, *bimetallic currency*, coined at the rate of 16:1 (sixteen units of silver-backed currency to each unit of gold-backed currency). It was a fairly mild proposal, especially considering the radical *complete withdrawal of gold-backed currency* under Richard Milhouse Nixon, a figure much-criticized by historians but not one noted for left-leaning radicalism.⁶

That evening in Gainesville, Vann Woodward sold his audience the Populist program by showing them how much of it was already gratifyingly in place as their beloved New Deal, then quite popular in both panhandle and prairie.⁷ Woodward continued to document Populist reform and New Deal reform throughout a long life, though at the end of his nine decades, he was bemused to find a resurgent right-wing that disdained FDR much as Editor White had.

Poppa Tindall, kindly mentor to more than forty historian Ph.Ds., also had much good to say about the historical (especially the Kansas) Populists, but he lectured all concerned that it was a movement by and about rural-farming problems in the nineteenth-century and not one whose name should be appropriated for the twentieth- or the twenty-first century (especially not among us Chapel Hill radicals and reformists who were innocent of farming life no matter how sympathetic we waxed in the 1970s in the Durham socialist newspaper the *Anvil* or in its ideologically more pure Chapel Hill *Bread and Roses*). Tindall preached that Populists were products of time and place, were dead now and gone now, and not usefully compared to anyone living and voting one hundred years later. With a merry twinkle and a twist of his bow-tie and a pull on his pipe, he quietly reminded graduate students and colleagues and town folk that Populist issues and personalities existed in another time and place and had absolutely no relevance to the here and now. In fact, pretending that twentieth-century personalities and politics could be so neatly referenced by dead heroes and villains did ahistorical (even anti-

intellectual) violence to both the living and the dead. Although admirer of Vann Woodward, Poppa Tindall was never fond of Woodward's transplanting the label *Populist* to figures like Jimmy Carter of Georgia or Fred Hart of Oklahoma or to any figure of the late-twentieth century—and he gently scolded Woodward in person and in print.⁸

In any case both Tindall and Woodward drew heavily on the meticulous scholarship and passionate advocacy of Walter Terry King Nugent (1935-2021), in his superb 1963 monograph, *The Tolerant Populists*. The book's very title may seem oxymoronic to those listening to a learned lecture on National Public Radio about populist demagogues in the Third World or to less-learned discussions on commercial outlets, most of whom equate the word *populist* with deceiving and screaming demagogues sharking their fists at Blacks, Jews, Muslims, women professionals, and Progressive politicians. Thomas Piketty, the great critic of unrestrained capitalism in this twenty first century says, "Populism. . . [has become] a catch-all term frequently used by elites to discredit political movements they deem to be insufficiently under their control."⁹ While apt for today's political debates, such a label cannot serve justly among the Populists at Southwestern College, in early Pi Gamma Mu conferences, or among those Black and white folk and especially the women of both races who actually created and ran the Populist Party long ago. Despite the eminence of Woodward and Tindall, it is the lesser-known Nugent the Kansas State professor whose monograph is the most important piece of scholarship on the real Populists; and it is his monograph and his own related career that is the touchstone for this *apologia pro vita sua*.

This scholar Nugent in his graduate studies and in his early teaching in Kansas while a young professor at Kansas State University had developed a deep appreciation for the Populists of his adoptive state. In the 1950s, when he arrived at Little Manhattan to teach, the State of

Kansas had largely turned away from any Populist celebration. It voted conservatively, and its people spoke of Populism much as had their revered editor William Allen White: *Populism was what had been the matter with Kansas in the 1890s*. Now that day was done and gone. In fact, Nugent declared that Populism was *bastinadoed*—tortured by beating on the bottom of its feet at least by writers in the 1950s. He set about a defense at once, but a defense that his elder friend Vann Woodward could call “fact-encrusted,” with documents from the Kansas Historical Society in Topeka and from the *Free Press/Industrial Free Press* newspaper morgue in Winfield—as well as *The Topeka Farmers’ Advocate*.¹⁰

A native of Watertown, New York (where his father Clarence served as office-manager for a paper mill and his mother Florence taught in the public schools), Nugent began his education at the Roman Catholic St. Benedict’s College in Atchison KS (an antebellum Benedictine college for men associated with an abbey)—and concluded his long career at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. A Catholic educated by Catholics, Nugent adapted himself to largely Protestant Kansas: He was himself a personal recipient of the kind of welcoming-of-the-outsider that he celebrated for the Midwest that the Northeastern came to love.

He documented the substantive work of the “pregnant failure” Populists and he also documented “the bastinadoing” of their 1950s critics led by marvelous historian Richard Hofstadter (1916-1970) in his gem of a book, *The Age of Reform from Bryan to FDR*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1956. The book has larger concerns, but in it Hofstadter critiques reformists for not responding to economic grievances with workable proposals—but instead blaming others for their “status anxiety” as they lost position, power, and place in a new world where a farming society became an industrial society and a rural society became an urban one. The Populists, Hofstadter asseverates, “looked backward” to a “golden age” of farming that

never was—and instead of adjusting to the demands of urban industry and highly technological manufacturing romanticized the farming life and used emotional and irrelevant appeals while also using prejudicial, often antisemitic, language against their opponents. Facing facts and “looking forward” and offering practicable solutions to real problems, as the New Deal did, the Populists could have won elections and accomplished reform. The graceful stylist and otherwise close student of public affairs spoke as a self-styled Consensus Liberal rejecting radicalism and reactionaryism in favor of a Franklin Roosevelt approach in which ethnic and worker-interest minorities coalesced around compromise *politics of the possible*. In 1963, he produced the highly influential *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, which also won the Pulitzer Prize. In the latter book he derided the Kansans of 1890s for “demagoguery and destructive populism.”¹¹

Hofstadter considered the rhetoric about English financial abuse and foreign speculation in farmland to be intolerant, even proto-fascist blaming of Jews for inevitable results of the modern markets. The emphasis on farmer-owned and farmer-operated land, Hofstadter connected to *nativism*, a deep prejudice against those immigrants most recently arrived in the U.S. during the *fin de siècle* years of population growth fueled primarily by immigration of Irish and of Jewish and Roman Catholic folk from southern and eastern Europe instead of the Protestants of the British Isles. John William Higham (1920-2003) created the term *nativism* and used it to describe a prejudice against the newly arrived—and did so ironically since he also demonstrated that the “native” Anglo Saxon and Protestants were themselves relative newcomers who had not violently displaced the Amerindian natives. Nativist intolerance and its rhetoric and its actions were cousin to racism and other ethnic prejudice and brought down violence on “out groups” while also deflecting political attention from substantive structural problems in the rapidly changing economy. Put “status anxiety” with “nativism” and one had a sharp critique of

those opponents of the new economics. A host of Consensus Liberals inspired by Hofstadter and Higham went beyond the two historians and blamed Populists for rhetorical excesses of antisemitism and anti-immigrant behavior never claimed by either of the original Consensus historians. Daniel Bell even edited a book of readings in which the left-wing radicals were described as New Right reactionaries and racists who were nothing less than *Protofascist*.¹²

It was heady stuff, looking back to the anti-Irish and anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish abuses of the early twentieth century and looking forward to the wild excesses of red-baiting Wisconsin's U.S. Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy (1908-1957)—and all of it actually the fault of hayseeds in Kansas and rednecks in Georgia. But heady stuff is not always history, and the Catholic New Yorker Nugent knew a different Kansas and a different Georgia and certainly knew farmers badly described by the Consensus scholars.

As Vann Woodward had told Nugent, the Populists had real grievances about material loss as well as perceived loss of status, but they also proposed solutions in a definitive program, one that was substantially enacted in the New Deal rather than in their own era. Nugent could draw on Woodward and Tindall for solid examples of the actual Populist proposals—and he could connect the dots to the “forward looking” New Deal and dispel any accusations of backward-looking proposals that could not be enacted. But there surely were the recent demagogic Nazis and fascists who had sponsored railroad regulation and other such practical proposals and then defended substantive economic reform as Vienna's Mayor Karl Lueger did with the bloody antisemitism that spawned *The Hitler*. And Louisiana had Huey Pierce Long (1893-1935) and Brazil had Getulio Vargas (1882-1954) and Argentina had Juan Domingo Peron (1895-1974). Each had “looked forward” and brought economic reform in roads and schools and dams and desperately needed financial reforms, but each was rabidly racist and murderously

antisemitic. Someone had to document that the Populists, especially in Kansas, did not employ such rhetoric and in fact won support from immigrants, Catholics, and Jews. That task fell to young Professor Nugent.

The book is compact and quotable, for Nugent was as sardonic and witty a writer as Clio's Muse ever produced. It is also names, dates, and places, and the detail is quite full. He *names* names and *places* places detailing Jews, Catholics, Irish, Scandinavians, Blacks, and even the occasional Englishman who supported Kansas Populists. He also shows that late-nineteenth century Kansas was very much a land of immigrants—and a destination that produced a polyglot multiculturalism more famed in New York City than in the wheatland. Far from crying over a lost physiocracy of farmland, the Populists embraced newly arrived ethnic groups and welcomed a new industrialism. Winfield's own Populist newspaper often carried on its masthead the proud title *Industrial Free Press*, and its writers boosted new industry as excitedly as did the more renowned editor White. And he shows what Higham also showed us, viz., the northeastern elite who dominated Benjamin Harrison's Republican Party provides the jingoism and the antisemitic rhetoric and the other aspects of racism and nativism. It is the Kansas Populists who emerge from the "fact encrusted" study as the tolerant ones—and Nugent lists the ethnic minorities who voted Populists and publicized Populism and above all expressed their gratitude for equitable treatment by the path-breaking third party.¹³

He notes too how feminists of the day were Populists, and how active a role women played not only running and working the farms but in building and running the party. And he shows nuance: Feminists in Kansas had reason to be "tee-totally against likker" since women's property rights were nil and men who drank up a family's income—as well as "likkered up" men who beat their wives—were a graver menace where alcohol ran freely. The nuance is that

Irishmen and Scandinavians had a different relationship to alcohol than did midwestern Protestants and were threatened culturally by alcohol-prohibition. Inside the Populists then there were discussions about prohibition of alcohol and tolerance for Irish Catholics, and the prohibitionist feminists argued with the “wet” Catholics, but all resolved most of the tensions in time to go vote for Woman’s Suffrage and for Populist economic proposals. It was the Kansas Populists who at Ocala insisted on racially integrating the old Alliance parties—and they did so in caucuses and roundtables that featured white women sitting at table with Black men to discuss reform. Mixing gender and race in the South, and much of the Northeast, was *tabu* except amongst Populist meetings, where it was standard operating procedure.¹⁴

In addition, Nugent details how in that day—as in this one—literacy requirements for voting were excuses for limiting the vote by excluding Blacks, Mexicans, eastern European Jews, and the Irish. He also insists, “throughout the heyday of the literacy test scheme in the nineties the Kansas Populists never supported the test or the racist notions that underlay it.” Perhaps most tellingly for one defending a people against scapegoating, Nugent also marks it that when William Jennings Bryan was defeated in 1896, no Populist turned against immigrants or Black people or any other “usual suspect” among the unpopular and newly arrived; instead, they went about the futile business of picking up the pieces and attempting to rebuild the state-wide multicultural and interracial alliances. They failed not out of racist or ethnic prejudice but because “the bugle” of the Spanish American War “drowned out” the “bugle of reform,” much as Populist Tom Watson and the Georgians had warned. As to that war of conquest, Nugent is also at pains to mark it that the Kansas Populists supported the 1898 War in hopes of liberating Cubans and opposed annexation—in other words, the Kansas Populists were sincerely interested

in autonomy for “colored” Caribbean and Filipino folk and not hiding behind rhetoric to create an empire.¹⁵

Summing up a book full of such claims supported by specific examples, Nugent quotes the Kansas congressman Ben Clover who in 1894 entered into the *Congressional Record* a protest against immigration restriction: “Of course we can stop pauper immigration if we decide to do so. We can, however, just as easily enact laws that will give every man, woman, and child constant and profitable work if they wish it...Be it remembered that paupers and criminals are the products of perfidious and criminal legislation.” That was a Populist speaking for Populists, and his words were celebrated by Kansans but denigrated and worse by mainline Democrats and Republicans of the day. Nugent says of this representative Populist: “This may be the view of a nineteenth-century idealist, and he no doubt placed far too much confidence in the beneficent effect of good laws and good education. But it is hardly the view of a nativist, or a chauvinist, or a conspiracy-minded neurotic or a racist.” Nor was it, as Hofstadter claimed, *paranoid style* politics.¹⁶

Much has been written since 1963 about the Populists, but yet, at least for Kansas, nothing has disproven Nugent’s thesis: The Kansas Populists were not guilty of nativism, were quite tolerant of ethnic and racial and other differences, and their forthright preachment of tolerance and acceptance won them followers among the eastern European immigrants—Jews and Catholics—as well as among the Scandinavians and the Irish. Upon their defeat in 1896 and their disappearance after 1898, the defeated but still-living Populists did not “sour” and “scapegoat” the minorities alongside whom they had marched. Following up on the careers of ex-Populists in Kansas, Nugent finds they remained tolerant of ethnic, racial, and religious differences. Most of the ex-Populists went back into the Republican Party. There they became

the tolerant minority wing of an often intolerant majority Party. Like Congressman Ben Clover, they were often remembered by opponents as overly idealistic and overly optimistic about what education could accomplish, but they were not remembered as the kind of bigots described by the bastonadoing scholars who forgot to do scholarly research.¹⁷

As for their southern cousins, especially in Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, and Alabama, the Populist story after 1896 was an unhappy one. Indeed, Vann Woodward looking at southern Populists in defeat, labeled them “sour” and documented how they “scapegoated” their onetime Black allies. Woodward’s most famous book, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*—what the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. carried with him to the Edmund Pettus Bridge and told his fellow marchers was the “Bible of the Civil Rights Movement”—was a close study of “soured” Populists frustrated by political defeat as well as poverty and aggressively scapegoating the “out group” of Blacks who had been their allies. The southern Populist tolerance of the 1890s was far to seek by 1898, but Woodward showed that such racial cooperation was there in the Populist years and then gone in the years of their defeat, 1896-1898. Like Nugent, Woodward in following the defeated Populists in their careers after 1896 found them to be members of the Ku Klux Klan and lynch mobs (one of which he witnessed as a twelve-year old) who literally brutalized the Black people who were once allies. Yet, *strange* as tolerant behavior was in the Jim Crow years, 1898-1954, Woodward showed that it had been prevalent in the Populist years—largely because of Black behavior then and because of encouragement by the Kansas Populists.¹⁸

Of course, for those who dislike government regulation or any other kind of strong government, the Ocala Platform deserved the defeat it got in the period 1896-1898. And for that large group that now dislikes the New Deal, the Populist progenitors of Franklin Roosevelt and

Harry Truman deserve blame for the policies that eventually were enacted in the period 1933-1951. But such disagreements are about policies and not about prejudice or rhetoric. On the score of attitude, language, behavior, and other aspects of racial and ethnic tolerance, Nugent has definitively won the day for the Kansas, and specifically the Winfield Populists. It is a relationship wheatbelt Kansans, people of Southwestern College, and members of Pi Gamma Mu can be proud of.

ENDNOTES

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- 1 .On Comer Vann Woodward, see a baker's dozen of interviews filed in John Herbert Roper Papers of the Southern Historical Collection, the Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, hereinafter Roper Papers, SHC/LUNC; see also my biography, *C. Vann Woodward, Southerner* (1987. Rev. reprint ed.; Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2012), my collected edition of essays by Woodward critics, *C. Vann Woodward, a Southern Historian and His Critics* (1997. Rev. reprint ed.; Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2012); and my senior and superior James Charles Cobb who wrote a much-acclaimed biography, *C. Vann Woodward, America's Historian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022); J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, ed., *Region, Race and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Woodward, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History*, Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History, 1986 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987). On George Brown Tindall, see his magisterial *Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945*, Vol. X of A History of the South Series, ed. Ellis Merton Coulter and Wendell Holmes Stephenson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press for Littlefield Fund of the University of Texas, 1967) and his superb (and rightly grateful) students Elizabeth Jacoway, Dan T. Carter, Lester C. Lamon, and Robert C. McMath Jr., *The Adaptable South; Essays in Honor of George Brown Tindall* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1991). Walter Terry King Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists: Populists and Nativism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). "Walter Terry King Nugent," *South Bend Tribune*, 22 September 2021, obit.
 - 2 .Kansas Historical Society, Historical Search Room, Museum of Kansas, Topeka: *The Winfield Free Press* online archives, accessed throughout 2022 and 2023, most recently 23 October 2023, hereinafter KHS, Topeka; Southwestern [Methodist] College, online archives, accessed 23 October 2023; I should also credit honored but unnamed Southwestern alumni, who generously helped me with regard to Pi Gamm Mu Honorary over the decades. *Plain Folk*, as a term to describe freeholding farmers of the middling class, viz., neither sharecroppers nor renters nor yet again large-scale planters, was coined by Frank Lawrence Owsley and his wife Harriet, Idem., *Plain Folk of the Old South*, Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History, 1948 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949). Although Owsley focused tightly on the antebellum South, his term aptly describes freeholding and "middling" farmers of any race anywhere in the rural U.S., a point made often by Robert C. McMath Jr.,

president of Agricultural Historical Society. See esp. Idem. with Peter H. Argensinger, Connie L. Lester, Michael F. Magliari, and Walter Terry King Nugent, “Agricultural History Roundtable on Populism,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 82 (Winer 2008): 1-35.

3. “Radical immediatist” was a term that emerged from dialogue between scholars David Brion Davis and Aileen S. Kraditor to describe feminists who demanded immediate radical change in race, slavery, and gender policies—with *immediate* to define both *doing it now (time)* and being *personally and immediately responsible for injustice (place)*: Aileen S. Kraditor, *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1965) and Idem., *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism; Garrison and His Critics, 1834-1860* (New York: Random House Vintage Paper, 1970); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1967), later *The Problem of Slavery Series*, 5 vols. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1967). The historian of midwestern Populism was John Donald Hicks, *The Populist Revolt; a History of the Farmers’ Alliance and the Populist Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press Bison Books, 1931) and Idem. with George E. Mowry and Robert E. Burke, *A History of American Democracy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) and his widely read textbook, in print three decades, Idem. with Mowry and Burke, *The American Nation; a History of the United States from 1865 to the Present* (1949. Reprint eds.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949-1970). Although I did not record his remarks anywhere, I must credit George E. Mowry for sharing memories and insights of his mentor John Donald Hicks when Mowry was himself my mentor at Chapel Hill.

4. William Allen White, “What’s the Matter with Kansas?,” op. ed., *Emporia Gazette*, 15 August 1896, KHS, Topeka and online; subject of documentary and often “performed” by Chatauqua-type speakers, many accessible on-line. For sympathetic but relatively thorough coverage of White’s speech, see Bill Moyers with Thomas Franks, “What’s the Matter with Kansas?” documentary, 23 December 2009, Public Broadcasting System online, accessed 23 October 2023. Cf. Hicks’s *American Nation* textbook and earlier special study, *Populist Revolt and A History of American Democracy*, all of which rose in popularity during Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy/Johnson years—and then also all but vanished in the conservatism of the Nixon-Reagan years. The eloquence and even erudition of Populist rhetoric are lovingly preserved in Bruce Palmer’s 1972 dissertation, “The Rhetoric of Southern Populists: Metaphor and Imagery in the Language of Reform” (Ph.D. diss.; New Haven: Yale University, 1972), revised considerably and published, Idem., “*Man Over Money*”: *The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

5. Interviews, Woodward with Roper, Roper Papers, SHC/LUNC; Roper, C. Vann Woodward, *Southerner*, p. 292; On Woodward and his 1938 Phi Beta Kappa speech, Roper, op. cit., pp. 116-22; 125-28; Woodward essays reprinted in *The Burden of Southern History* (1955. Rev. reprint paper ed.; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960) and Idem., *American Counterpoint; Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (1961. Rev. reprint paper ed.; Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) and his biography on Populist leader, Idem., *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Macmillan, 1938). Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists*. Cf. usage of *Populism* the term to describe anti-Muslim and ethnically prejudicial demagogues, National Public Radio Series, “Populism in the World: Segment Two, India,” 11 April 2023.

6. Milton Friedman with Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States*, National Bureau of Economic Research Studies in Business Cycles (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). Friedman and Schwartz were no fans of silver-backed currency either,

and liked Nixon's reform, which remains our monetary system today. Friedman and Schwartz were also no fans of a single thing the Populists proposed.

7. Woodward, Phi Beta Kappa Address, 1938, Manning J. Dauer Papers, Special Collections of University of Florida, Gainesville, summarized, Roper, *C. Vann Woodward*, pp 116-22; 125-28.

8. See esp. Tindall, "Populism, a Semantic Identity Crisis," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 48 (1972): 501-18, and Idem., ed., *A Populist Reader* (1964. Rev. reprint ed.; Magnolia MA, 1975). George Tindall's son Bruce Tindall and distinguished student Jerrold Hirsch and I all wrote for the *Anvil*, run by Bob Brown of Chapel Hill, and we all read *Bread and Roses*, run by more purist (and not always named) Marxists. None of us kept copies, and only a few issues are preserved in the Southern Historical Collection and North Carolina Collection, both in the Library of the University of North Carolina. What remains is pretty tame stuff, and my estimation is that we were closer to George McGovern than we were to Mary Ellen Lease and William Jennings Bryan—which was exactly Poppa Tindall's point. In fact Poppa Tindall liked to tell us that in proper historical perspective we were more like Hubert Horatio Humphrey and Lyndon Johnson than we were to any Populists.

9. Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology* (trans. Arthur Goldhammer; Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2020) p. 39.

10. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists*, preface, frontispiece, and p. 1.

11. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform from Bryan to FDR* (New York: Random House Vintage paper, 1956); idem., *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Random House Vintage paper, 1963), reissued in handsome version edited by Sean Wilentz by Library of America in 2020.

12. Hofstadter, op. cit.; John William Higham, *Strangers in the Land; Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (1955. Rev. reprint ed.; New York: Atheneum, 1988). Daniel Bell, ed., *The New American Right; Essays by Bell, Richard Hofstadter, Peter Viereck, Talcott Parsons, and Seymour Martin Lipset* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955).

13. Nugent, op. cit., esp. chapt. "The People's Party and Other People," pp. 91-126.

14. Nugent, op. cit., pp. 149-79.

15. Nugent, op. cit., p. 205.

16. Nugent, op. cit., p. 179. Cf. Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), also handsomely republished by Library of America volume edited by Sean Wilentz in 2020.

17. See esp. Woodward, "The Populist Heritage and the Intellectual," *American Scholar*, Vol. 28 (1959): 55-72, reprinted, *The Burden of Southern History* (1960. Rev. ed.; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968)p. 141-66.

18. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955. Rev. ed. with afterword by William Mc Feely; New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2000). Interviews, Woodward with Roper, Roper Papers, SHC/LUNC.