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*Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor  
Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South* (review)

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Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 111, Number 4, April 2008, pp.  
460-461 (Review)

Published by Texas State Historical Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/swh.2008.0106>



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account, census records, or an interview with a descendant of the community or the black survivors—to piece together a story of the expulsion of several hundred blacks from their homes and communities. Jaspin is less successful in attempting to place his story in its larger historical context. His knowledge of history and his selection of sources is flawed, and he occasionally overgeneralizes, misinterprets, or relies on dated or less than reliable secondary sources. There is also the question of the use of the term “racial cleansing.” This term conjures up images of Bosnia or Darfur where hundreds of thousands were systematically resettled or slaughtered in a human tragedy of immense proportions. Jaspin’s editors at the *Austin American-Statesman*, where he first ran his story, ultimately rejected the term, substituting instead “racial expulsion.” They also eliminated references to his charges that the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was complicit in covering an episode of racial cleansing in nearby Forsyth County, Georgia.

In spite of Jaspin’s occasional flaws of scholarship and his digression into his personal struggles with his employer, this is a book that cannot be ignored. Whether it is racial cleansing or expulsion, the story that unfolded in scattered rural communities, North and South, in the decades that followed emancipation is important and deserves our attention. Jaspin should be commended for bringing it to us.

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CARY D. WINTZ

*Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South.* By Matthew Hild. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2007. Pp. 344. Maps, appendices, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-0-82032-897-3. \$42.95, cloth.)

Matthew Hild’s *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists* addresses the previously neglected subject of biracial farmer-labor-political collaboration across the South during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. These tumultuous decades witnessed great conflicts between labor and capital over the meaning of democracy, which in the South culminated in the Populist movement. Hild has redefined Southern Populism as not a farmers’ revolt but instead a farmer-labor movement with a continuity dating from the Greenback Party of the 1870s. Hild backs his assertions through an analysis of the proceedings of numerous Grange, Knights of Labor (KOL), and other labor organizations, as well as newspapers of the era, and by drawing upon the previous historiography of populism and agrarian protest in the South.

Hild traces the continuity of farm-labor insurgency beginning with the Greenback-Labor Party (GLP) of the 1870s by demonstrating the commonality of the KOL’s Reading platform of 1878 along with the GLP’s Toledo platform of the same year, the Texas Farmers’ Alliance Cleburne demands of 1886, and the Populists’ Omaha platform of 1892. Hild contends that in states where farm-labor insurgency held the greatest amount of continuity, for instance Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama, Populists had greater success in building a strong party backed by both farmers and laborers. While Hild acknowledges that a history of farm-labor collaboration was not necessary for a strong People’s Party, North Carolina and Georgia each had

large parties with minimal labor support, it was necessary to attract the support of labor to populism.

Previous historians have acknowledged the continuity of agrarian protest from the GLP to the People's Party; however, Hild's analysis of the primacy of labor's involvement in this continuity differs greatly from the current historiography. The stark difference comes through in Hild's interpretation of the Great Southwest Railroad Strike of 1886. While historians have argued that the defeat of rail workers at the hand of Jay Gould served as a hindrance that prevented future farmer-labor collaboration due to blows suffered by the KOL, Hild states "the strike actually served as a catalyst for farmer-labor third party insurgency" (48). The strike, according to Hild, fostered direct political collaboration between farmers and laborers against their common enemy in the railroad corporations. For Hild this collaboration laid the groundwork for future farmer-labor insurgency through the populist revolt.

Some readers may argue that the KOL's declining numbers through the 1890s prevented any potential labor support for populism. Hild suggests the KOL's influence persisted despite its decline in actual members. He points to the fact that many individuals, including Texas Alliance president William Lamb, belonged to both the KOL and Farmers' Alliance. In many areas across the South, before the spread of the Alliance, many insurgent-minded farmers belonged to KOL chapters. As the Alliance spread they blended naturally into the Alliance due to their common platforms. According to Hild, the non-segregationist practices of the KOL also laid the groundwork for biracial farmer-labor insurgency across the South that lasted until the brutal repression of populism and the advent of Jim Crow laws.

Students of Southern radicalism and labor history will find this book incredibly enlightening, especially those with a particular interest in Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas, due to the more pronounced convergence of farmers and laborers in these states. While Hild, with his focus on joint farmer-labor insurgency, did not intend to create a general study of Southern agrarian insurgency and populism, no broader understanding of the topic is possible without taking into account this well-argued and convincing book.

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*The Gun That Wasn't There.* By Russell S. Smith. (Privately printed, 2007. Pp. 254. Illustrations, notes, index. ISBN 1-41962-817-8. \$18.99, paper.)

Russell S. Smith's longtime history as a Texas law enforcement officer and police chief suit him, his subject, and readers well in his taut nonfiction recounting of violence set in West Texas in the 1960s. Having said that, it is refreshing that the tale told in his book, *The Gun That Wasn't There*, was done with just a tip of the hat brim in recognition of his relationship to the brotherhood of police officers. That is refreshing because unlike many cop stories Smith appears to have made an effort at not writing a completely prejudiced account of heroism (real or perceived) of the real-life subjects in the book. Instead he has presented each of these men as they likely were: well-meaning, honest individuals who for the most part viewed law enforcement as more than a paycheck and not at all glorious. His account of the