THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE IN WISE
COUNTY, TEXAS, 1880-1897

THESIS

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By

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The Farmers' Alliance in Wise County, from its introduction in 1880 to its demise in 1897, endeavored to improve the mental, moral, social, and financial conditions of small agrarians in the north central Texas county. This paper details the Alliance's efforts, in cooperative ventures and political activism and third-party politics, to place farmers in a better economic position. Additionally, the paper focuses on the Alliance's attempts to provide educational and social opportunities and moral guidance to the membership. Source materials include government documents and publications, contemporary accounts, the county Alliance's official newspaper, area newspapers, and the original minutes of the county Alliance from 1893 to 1897.
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Fig. 1--Map showing location of Wise County in Texas
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CHAPTER I

THE FRONTIER SETTING AND THE
ARRIVAL OF THE ALLIANCE

Wise County,¹ Texas was created by an act of the State Legislature approved 23 January 1856. Formal organization of the county occurred, pursuant to the creating act, on 5 May 1856, at which time elections were held to fill the various county offices. The following year, residents of the county chose a yet unnamed hilltop site near the center of the county as the seat of local governmental administration. For a name, Colonel Alsolom Bishop (the prime mover in the organization plan) chose Taylorville in honor of General Zachary Taylor. In 1858, Bishop, then a member of the Texas House of Representatives, introduced a bill that changed the name of the county seat to Decatur in honor of Commodore Stephen A. Decatur.²


²H. P. N. Gammel, comp. and arr., The Laws of Texas, vol. 4 (Austin: The Gammel Book Company, 1898), pp. 203-204; Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Wise County, Texas, 1856, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; Cliff D.
Settlement of the area comprising present-day Wise County began three years prior to the date of organization. In the autumn of 1853, Sam Woody, who was born in Tennessee in 1826 and came to Texas in 1850, and two other men left their settlement near Fort Worth and ventured into the southern part of the county in search of land on which to build a home and raise a family. Sufficiently impressed with the area, Woody returned to Fort Worth and during the winter months prepared his family for a move to the region. Woody's return trip, however, was not as pleasant. When he and his family arrived at the location he had visited the year before, he found the land had already been claimed by a prospector from Dallas County. Undaunted, Woody and his family continued northward and established the first permanent residence in the county near Deep Creek. Woody was seemingly even more impressed with this location than the former, for he later called the area "the prettiest sight I have ever seen . . . just as the Great God of Heaven left it; where every stream is full of fish and every hollow tree gorged with honey."³

Lured by the inducement of 160 acres of free land to any individual who would build a house and remain on the land for three years, other pioneer settlers followed Woody and migrated into the northeastern and southeastern parts of the county. By 1860, 541 families with over 3,000 members inhabited the county. 4

The majority of the new residents were stockmen-farmers. In 1860 the county recorded 149 farms with three or more acres. Small farms were common, the majority falling within the 10 to 100 acre category. 5 Although the county had over 4,000 acres of land in cultivation at that same date, the majority of the crops planted were for stock feed or subsistence purposes. Had the settlers been dependent on their crops for survival, they probably would have perished during the first several years. 6

In 1857 the area was hard hit by a severe drought lasting seven years. Coupled with the drought was the constant problem with grasshoppers that would come in from the north in the autumn and return in the spring, destroying


crops and gardens in their wake. While the county had once attracted "wide attention as a land flowing with milk and honey, and as affording boundless advantages to those seeking inexpensive homes," these difficulties resulted in new settlers turning back.

Notwithstanding the seriousness of the drought and grasshopper plagues, settlers in the frontier region of North Texas had several more challenges to survive. The two most notable were Indian depredations and the Civil War.

Only docile Delaware Indians inhabited the area of present-day Wise County at the time of the first settlement, and the first few years passed with few incidents. This peaceful condition did not, however, occur by accident. In 1849, the United States government established eight military forts, including Fort Worth approximately forty miles south of Decatur, on the northern and western frontier to protect the settlers from hostile Indians. As settlers moved further west, the effectiveness of this line declined. In 1851, the federal government established a new line of defensive military posts approximately one hundred miles to the west of the existing forts to keep the Indians roaming the northwest and western sections of the state under control.

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7 Cates, Pioneer History, p. 91.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
The state government also became involved in the problem of frontier protection and in 1854 authorized the creation of a reservation west of the Pecos River on which to relocate the Indians.\(^{10}\)

Although the majority of the hostile Indians were removed from the vicinity of the settlements to the reservation, tranquility on the frontier did not exist for long. The Indians, becoming bolder after the removal of a number of federal troops along the frontier in 1857, penetrated the defensive lines of the forts and staged numerous raids into Young, Parker, Jack, and Palo Pinto counties to the west of Wise County in the late 1850s. Wise County suffered Indian hostilities shortly thereafter.\(^{11}\)

The raids into the area continued despite the removal of the Indians to Indian territory in 1859 and the creation of frontier ranger companies and county "minute men" as frontier protectors in 1861.\(^{12}\) The problems of combating the Indians' persistent raids were compounded by the Civil War.

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\(^{11}\) Richardson, *Texas*, p. 152; Cates, *Pioneer History*, pp. 159-160, 162.

After Texas' secession, the frontier protection forts in northwest and west Texas were turned over to the Confederacy. The Confederate government, more concerned with the war effort than with the Indians, turned the task of frontier protection over to the state. The state responded by creating the Frontier Regiment in 1863. The Regiment's effectiveness was limited, however, as the body comprised of only ten companies had the duty of patrolling the state's 1,000-mile frontier line.  

Following the war in 1866, the state government authorized the organization of three battalions of Texas Rangers to protect settlers, and in 1867 the federal government formally established Fort Richardson at Jacksboro, forty miles west of Decatur. While these new protections afforded the residents of Wise County aided in dealing with the Indian problem, they did not solve it. On 23 June 1870 the district clerk of Wise County, in a report on Indian hostilities ordered by the secretary of state, summed up the activity in the county from the spring of 1865 to the summer of 1870. During these years, the clerk reported twenty-one raids by bands of Comanches and Kiowas occurred in the county, resulting in twelve deaths, five captures, and the

killing or capture of 275 horses. Indian raiding parties continued their forays into the county until the mid-1870s.\textsuperscript{14}

As if the crop and Indian problems were not enough for the struggling settlers, the Civil War itself added to their misfortunes. Because of their frontier locale, the county's residents depended on essential supplies imported into the state. With the state's ports blockaded, essential goods could not enter. Owing to the scarcity caused both by the blockade and general conditions of war, those goods that were unavailable rose in value and price until the settlers found them unattainable.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition to scarcity and inflation, the county felt the effects of the drain in manpower resulting as the men went off to battle. Of the voting population of approximately seven hundred, some four hundred served the Confederacy. Their service left few men to run the businesses, tend the farms, and protect the home folks from hostile Indians. Farming, considered dangerous in light of the raids, stopped and the lands reverted to their original state. All forms of social interaction ceased. Seeking


\textsuperscript{15}Cates, \textit{Pioneer History}, p. 127.
protection, those individuals that decided to stay moved in from the outlying areas of the county and clustered in and around Decatur.  

The Indian raids and the problems caused by the Civil War had dire effects on the fledling county. By 1870, the population dwindled to 1,450, the number of farms dropped to eighty-two, and the county reported no manufacturing establishments.

Conditions began a slow but steady improvement during the late 1870s. The county's population rose to 16,601 by 1880 and farming came into prominence during the 1870s. Equally divided between prairie and timber land in the eastern and western sections respectively, watered by the Trinity River and its numerous tributaries, and having black waxy and dark gray and red sandy loam soils, the county provided ample and good farming lands for cotton and seed grains. By 1880 Wise County had 2,209 farms with over

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16 Ibid., pp. 126-129.


84,000 acres of tilled land and an estimated farm production value of over $600,000.19

Principal crops grown in the county in 1879 included corn (27,400 acres yielding over 350,000 bushels), wheat (4,121 acres yielding over 26,000 bushels), oats (2,267 acres yielding over 43,000 bushels), and cotton. Approximately one-fourth of the county's tilled lands were planted in cotton and the county reported 7,231 bales produced from 21,000 plus acres. With prices running from approximately $41.00 to $48.00 a bale,20 the cotton produced could expect to bring from $296,000 to $347,000 when sold on the market.

While the lure of an increased income, especially from cotton, tempted farmers to change, the transition from subsistence to commercial farming did not occur without farmers encountering problems. While engaged in subsistence farming, a grower did not have to concern himself with the problems of competition, marketing, or transportation. The crops grown by the farmer were used for feeding himself, his


family, and his stock. Upon entering the commercial sphere, the small agrarian faced new and oftentimes bewildering challenges. Not only was he thrown into competition with both local and foreign growers, he often found it difficult to finance and to sell his crops and sometimes he had trouble in getting his produce to market. In addition to these problems, farmers in the Wise County area had to contend with one other significant obstacle: in 1880 the county remained in a frontier environment.

While small farmers in Wise County struggled with their frontier existence, farmers in the central area of the state were organizing to meet the problems. These organizational efforts would eventually have a significant impact on Wise County agrarians.

In the late 1870s a group of farmers in the sparsely populated northern section of Lampasas County banded together and formed an organization to combat problems common to frontier areas. The Knights of Reliance, or Farmers' Alliance, as the Order was later called, had the initial aims of protecting the members' stock and easing the farmers' feeling of isolation.

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Fencing had not been introduced into the area, and cattle roaming at will provided excellent targets for thieves. The Alliance, in an effort to safeguard the members' stock, appointed two individuals to record the brands of the membership, report on stray animals, and aid local law officials in capturing rustlers. As Alliance lodges became active in other localities, a system was devised whereby each suballiance would submit estray information to the state secretary for dissemination to other local groups.23

Lampasas County boasted a number of socially oriented clubs during the 1870s, but most of these were located in the county seat and not accessible to inhabitants in other sections of the county. The Alliance was the first group organized in the county to benefit individuals in the outlying areas. The secret nature of the organization caught the farmers' interest and provided them a forum where "shared values could be reaffirmed and new courses of action clothed with authority."24

The benefits provided to the Alliance membership in Lampasas and surrounding counties abruptly came to an end, however, as some members tried to use political action as a means of solving the increasing problems of the frontier

24 Ibid., pp. 5, 7.
farmer. In 1878 the state Alliance split into two factions: one favoring the infusion of the Order into politics and one seeking to remain outside the political arena to act as a pressure group for reforms against monopolistic practices. The faction favoring political action won this battle, but lost the war as the Greenback Party candidates endorsed by the Alliance were defeated at the polls in 1878 and 1880. The political activity and subsequent losses combined to kill the Alliance movement in the area.\textsuperscript{25} While the proposition of political action on the part of the farmers was defeated at the Lampasas area polls, the proposition that farmers did need to organize to protect and promote their interests survived and flourished in the north central area of the state.

In the spring of 1879, William T. Baggett, a school teacher and Alliance member in Coryell County, moved north and settled in Parker County. In addition to bringing the necessary tools of his profession, Baggett brought along a copy of the Lampasas Alliance constitution. After establishing a school in Poolville, Baggett set out to organize the farmers in the community into an Alliance.\textsuperscript{26}


\textsuperscript{26}McMath, Populist Vanguard, p. 9; Garvin, History of the National Farmers' Alliance, p. 125.
The farmers in the north central Texas area, like those in the Lampasas area, suffered from the ills of frontier life. Population increases, disputes between farmers and ranchers brought about by the introduction of barbed wire fences, and preemption of farming lands by the railroads and land companies presented the most serious threats to area farmers in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Baggett, with a keen sense of organization fostered by his previous service in the state Grange and Alliance, enlisted his fellow citizens and established Poolville Alliance Number One in June 1879. On the 29th of July the membership met for a preliminary meeting to chart the group's future. Seeking to avoid the mistake of the old Alliance, the delegates deleted the political phraseology from Baggett's copy of the declaration of principles and adjourned to spread anew the idea of a non-partisan organization to promote farming interests.

Prior to the first recorded meeting of the Grand State Farmers' Alliance on 12 June 1880, Baggett and other early members organized six new alliances in Parker County, two in neighboring Jack County, and two in Wise County to the north: Mount Pleasant Number Nine and Garrett Creek Number Eleven. In little more than a month, three additional alliances were

27Ibid.

established in Wise County, and at the latter alliance, Annis Chapel Number Seventeen, Alliancemen from the various local lodges met on 4 September and organized the first Grand County Farmers' Alliance recognized by the new state Farmers' Alliance.29

When William L. Garvin, elected first president of the county Alliance in September, and J. A. Culwell represented the local groups from Wise County at the state meeting a week later, much had transpired to shape the Alliance's future. During the early meetings in 1880, the delegates proposed and then revised a constitution, formulated and received a test oath for prospective members, issued a declaration of principles, received a charter from the state, authorized additional organizers, and initiated the practice of electing officers annually.30 While all of these innovations were important to the Alliance cause in Wise County, the latter two proved extremely beneficial to the local organization.

Wise County presented itself as a prime target for Alliance activity between 1880 and 1884. As previously noted, the county enjoyed over a fivefold population

29Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, pp. 24-25; Paradise Messenger, 7 September 1880.

increase during the 1870s. Over 2,100 new farms paralleled the growth in population.\textsuperscript{31} While these developments contributed to increasing farmer participation in the Order, an additional factor afforded the Alliance a strong opportunity to make inroads into the county. As the 1870s ended, new settlers to Wise and surrounding counties became aware of the inequitable land system existing in the area. Disputes between farmers and ranchers over those lands not preempted by the land companies and railroads became volatile. The controversy resulted in the Alliance being blamed for vigilante actions in mid 1881.\textsuperscript{32}

In June, the \textit{Weatherford Times}, rival of the state Alliance journal the \textit{Weatherford Herald}, charged that the Alliance was responsible for numerous crimes in Wise, Parker, and Jack counties. Upset at being labeled "thieves, robbers, and even murderers," Alliancemen demanded a public hearing to clear the air. On 7 July fifty-seven members, representing every local Alliance, assembled in Weatherford to defend the Order before a group of Parker County citizens. After listening to members from the three counties deny the charges made by the \textit{Times'} editor, the assemblage approved

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a resolution exonerating the Alliance of charges of "mob law or anything else . . . [that is] not in strict accordance with the laws of our State." While the meeting did not resolve the problem, the incident provided impetus to the organization. As one Wise County member noted later, the Order needed only to keep the Times mad at the Alliance, "for it had wonderfully advertised us and success has been the end of it."34

While "wonderfully advertised" in the press, the group needed the means of informing prospective members of the Alliance's aims and for persuading area farmers to join the ranks. To this end, the state Alliance authorized more local organizers.35 The workers who toiled in Wise County took their task seriously, and this dedication to purpose resulted in substantial returns for both the county and the state movements.

At the state Alliance meeting in August 1882, the state secretary recorded twenty-seven active alliances in Wise County. The twenty-two new alliances organized since July 1880, ranked the county second only to Parker County in

33Garvin, History of the National Farmers' Alliance, pp. 23-25.

34Ibid., p. 28; Paradise Messenger, 19 August 1881.

Alliance activity. The quality of the men chosen as organizers for the Wise County area provides insight into how this increased participation was achieved. Of the four Wise County Alliancemen chosen to organize during the period, three had professional backgrounds in addition to interests in farming. Perhaps these professional men were better able to explain the purpose of the Alliance and convince the local farmers to join.

Owen G. Peterson, the first of the authorized organizers, purchased a farm and moved to Wise County from Parker County in 1877. A former county official and physician in his native Johnson County, Illinois, Peterson continued to practice medicine after moving to Texas, and began to farm upon his move to Wise County. The doctor, a charter member of Friendship Alliance Number Thirteen, quickly rose to a place of prominence in the Alliance as he aided in drafting the first constitution, wrote the majority of the Order's secret works, and as early historians of the group noted, "gave moral tone and permanency to the Order." 

William L. Garvin, appointed in September 1880 to organize the area, moved to Wise County in 1878 after residing in Red River County for more than twenty years. Upon arriving in the county, the native Mississippian

36Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, p. 36.
37Ibid., p. 26; Garvin, History of the National Farmers' Alliance, p. 133.
discovered a lack of educational facilities in the area. To remedy this, the former teacher returned to his old profession and opened a subscription school to educate the children of the families settled nearby. While concerned with education, Garvin also retained his strong ties to agricultural interests. For Garvin, the Alliance "aroused his curiosity, excited his imagination, and awakened in him a deep interest," and as a charter member of Friendship Alliance Number Thirteen, served in positions of authority in both the county and state bodies.\(^{38}\)

While Peterson and Garvin established a number of the county's early alliances, the third Wise County Allianceman appointed as an organizer deserves credit for establishing the majority of the new lodges in the county. S. O. Daws, a self-educated farmer and lay minister, came to Texas in 1868 and by 1880 was considered an "old citizen" of Wise County. Utilizing his established position in the county and harboring an intense desire to see a task fulfilled, Daws took to the field. The results of Daws' work in behalf of the Alliance reveal his true worth to the cause. Following his appointment in early 1881, Daws organized at least eight new suballiances in the county and initiated efforts to take the cause to farmers in the northern and

\(^{38}\)Garvin, History of the Grand State Farmers' Alliance, p. 34; Gregg, History of Wise County, p. 288; Garvin, History of the National Farmers' Alliance, p. 138.
western sections of the county. Up to his appointment, organizational efforts had been confined to the southern section of the county. Daws' work as an organizer is further evidenced by his work in behalf of the state Alliance when interest in the Order began to wain in 1883. In that year, the then president William Garvin employed Daws as a traveling lecturer to revive the Order, and in one month he reorganized fifteen dormant suballiances in North Texas.39

Through the efforts of such men as Peterson, Garvin, and Daws, Wise County became a stronghold for the Alliance in the early 1880s and both the state and local organizations benefited. On the state level the increased membership aided in perpetuating the Order and increasing its influence. At the local level, Wise County Alliancemen, owing to their increased activity, found themselves being selected to serve in positions of authority in the state body.

The state Alliance in August 1880, initiated the practice of electing officers annually. Prior to this change, officers were elected every six months and this

did not give the members chosen time to formulate sound policies or programs. Although several Wise County Alliance-men served in the high councils of the state body before the change, those elected later had a lasting impact on the direction of the organization. In the first seven annual elections, an Allianceman from Wise County captured the office of president six times.\(^4\)

By 1884 the state Alliance and the local bodies comprising the group had made substantial strides in establishing a viable organization to aid the farming class "mentally, morally, socially, and financially." The Alliance had a definite purpose and the necessary membership to see that purpose carried out. The Alliancemen of Wise County tried faithfully to accomplish the goal.

\(^{40}\)Garvin, History of the Grand State Farmers' Alliance, pp. 32, 37-76 passim. See Appendix A.
CHAPTER II

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND MORAL

ASPECTS OF THE ALLIANCE

During the early 1880s the economy of the north central Texas area, including Wise County, began to shift from one based on stock raising and subsistence farming to one based on the commercial farming of cotton and seed grains.¹ The increased activity in commercial farming resulted in area growers, especially those planting cotton, being drawn into the battle against one of the most difficult problems faced by small farmers all across the South: the system of credit extended to the farmers by the local merchant, or, as it was more commonly called, the "crop lien system."

A cotton crop required a full year to grow and be gathered; thus the farmer needed either sufficient capital or credit to enter into the venture. Banks and merchants generally supplied the needed credit and this encouraged farmers to plant the crop. Although the credit system led to increased activity in cotton farming, it also fostered developments that placed the farmer in an adverse financial position.

The local merchant took a mortgage on the farmer's cotton crop at the beginning of the year and guaranteed to supply all the farmer's needs on an interest-accruing basis. The merchant furnished supplies of all kinds and in some instances paid doctor bills and fieldhand wages incurred by the farmer during the year. This practice, however, put a financial burden on the merchant. To ease his burden, the merchant turned to a large wholesale warehouse to supply his customer's needs. Although this arrangement proved both efficient and convenient, it soon became expensive for both merchant and farmer alike. The farmer purchased goods regardless of price, and at times without a sufficient need for the item. The merchant, to meet the demands of the farmer, acquired the goods without regard to the inflated price he was charged by the warehouse. Because of the risks inherent in the system, both the wholesale warehouse and the merchant sought a higher profit to offset losses incurred when a farmer when bankrupt. To realize this larger profit, the prices charged for supplies to farmers still operating rose as farmer failures increased.

In addition to the farmer's indebtedness to the merchant and the merchant's indebtedness to the wholesale warehouse, the warehouse received the money for its operation from a banking institution. For the merchant and the warehouse to meet their respective credit obligations, the farmer's cotton had to be sold immediately after ginning.
This sale generally took place despite the depressed prices that existed in a tight money market in order for the grower to meet his creditor's demands for immediate loan repayment.

When the farmer sought to pay his account with the merchant, another problem generally arose. The price the cotton grower realized from the sale of his crop was low, while the price the farmer paid for his supplies during the year was high. At the end of the year, the farmer found himself unable to pay the full amount owed to the merchant. When the farmer failed to settle the bill, the merchant placed a mortgage on the grower's next crop and the credit system perpetuated itself. Until the farmer paid the last dollar owed, he found himself subjected to the constant oversight of the merchant holding his mortgage.2

The crop lien system, albeit a major problem, was only one of many confronting small farmers during the period. If by good fortune a farmer found himself in a position to sell his produce directly, he encountered a monopsonistic marketing system. The grower, in order to move his produce, had to sell at a price dictated by a local merchant or

produce monopsony and the proceeds received from the sale were usually low. Further compounding this initial lack of profit was the farmer's realization that the goods he sold were resold numerous times before they reached their final destination. Although the crops were resold at a higher price each time, the middleman and not the farmer reaped the substantial profits on the produce.³

Charges of monopolistic restraints were not limited to the marketing apparatus. The transportation system, or more precisely the railroads, also came under attack as a threat to the cause of small agrarians. Unregulated in regard to the price charged for hauling freight, the railroads became a target for charges of rate discrimination against the farming class.⁴

The grower, believing he was being cheated out of higher profits by the middleman and the railroads, began to search for solutions to these abuses. The farmer did not, however, have to search alone.

In the late 1870s, the Texas State Grange tried in numerous ways to combat the system, the most notable being the cooperative store plan. Under the plan, local farmers


purchased stock in a store and divided the profits accrued from the establishment's operation among themselves and the store's patrons at the end of the year. The plan worked well for several years, but the cooperative stores, like the local merchants, gravitated away from sound business methods and began to accept credit transactions. This credit buying resulted in the Grange's operation being drawn into the same system it sought to reform.5

In 1884 the state Farmers' Alliance, and more importantly the county and local organizations comprising the state body, endeavored to aid North Texas farmers seeking relief from the economic system threatening their existence. Through such means as preferential trade agreements with local merchants, combined sales of members' produce, and Alliance-owned cotton and lumber yards and granaries, the group sought to put the farmer in an economic position compatible with the one enjoyed by other tradesmen.

The initial efforts toward achieving the goal of economic equality were taken by the state Alliance at its meetings in early and mid 1884. During the February meeting, the delegates approved a resolution encouraging "the formation of joint stock companies . . . for the purposes of

trade, and for the personal benefit of members financially."

In a convention that August, the membership endorsed another resolution calling for the establishment of a committee to meet with cotton and produce buyers, bargain for better prices for the members' products, and report its findings to the state secretary who in turn would inform the local groups. While the passage of these resolutions marked the beginning of the Alliance's fight, the subsequent actions taken by Alliancemen in Wise County resulted in the battle being taken directly to the local markets, where it would be most likely to benefit the area farmers.

On 30 September, local growers assembled in Decatur for a bulk cotton sale sponsored by Alvord Alliance Number 151. As was the case with many local merchants at the time, Decatur buyers refused to pay what the farmers considered a fair price for the cotton. The farmers were, however, able to sell the cotton at their price to merchants in Denton.

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7Ibid., p. 72.

8Alvord Messenger, 17 October 1884.

Although the Alliance had little luck with Decatur merchants at its first sale, the group found a change of heart the following month. At an end-of-October bulk sale held in the same town, farmers from five or six surrounding counties deposited an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 bales of cotton for sale. The farmers sold the entire lot at eight and one half cents per pound, an increase over the prevailing street price. The above-average price farmers received for their cotton led one local newspaper to note that the sale "clearly demonstrated that unity of action among farmers will benefit them . . ." and stressed that if a like unity of action controlled states instead of just a few counties, the benefits derived would be as "proportionately great." Thus, the idea of bulk sales, first discussed at the August state meeting and subsequently initiated by local Wise County suballiances in late September, proved the area small farmers' cooperative efforts could result in financial gains. The success in late 1884 spurred the county Alliance to take further measures to increase farmer participation in the marketplace early the following year.

On 17 April 1885, approximately two hundred delegates representing a membership of 2,000 convened at Decatur for the Wise County Farmers' Alliance's first quarterly meeting

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10Alvord Messenger, 31 October 1884.
of the year. The convention delegates discussed a number of projects designed to aid the membership, but took definite action on only one. This project called for the establishment of Alliance-owned and operated cotton weighing and storage facilities in the towns of Decatur, Alvord, and Rhome. Confident the facilities would open, the delegates, in addition to appointing a committee to seek locations for the yards, selected another group to correspond with factory owners and cotton buyers to determine the price Alliancemen could get for the cotton sold at the three locations. Once again, as it had in regard to bulk sales, the Wise County Alliance forged ahead in its efforts to secure economic gains for its membership.

While the idea of establishing cotton yards was also recommended at the August 1884 state meeting, the state Alliance did not formally approve this measure until August 1886. By this date, the Wise County alliances' yards were in operation and serving the members.

In addition to the cotton yard committees appointed at this April 1885 meeting, the delegates authorized one other important committee. The county Alliance had been in existence for some four years, but the group did not have an official organ to spread the Alliance news to local farmers.

12Wise County Messenger, 25 April 1885.
13Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, pp. 39, 43.
Since Alliance activity was definitely on the upswing, a newspaper able to disseminate information on the group's activities became a necessity. After failing to approve either the Jacksboro Rural Citizen or the Decatur Democrat to serve as the official journal, a committee was selected to meet with area newspaper publishers and seek propositions from the pressmen. While a newspaper was important to the local alliances, so the alliances would be to the newspaper selected. With the patronage of 2,000 county-wide members in the balance, Wise County newspapers actively sought the appointment. The efforts of the press eventually selected were typical.

In a 25 April editorial, the Wise County Messenger began its campaign to become the official journal of the Wise County Farmers' Alliance by maintaining that the press was and always had been an advocate of the Alliance. Asserting that rural life or mechanical labor was conducive to the development of sound intelligence and dispelling the idea that intellectual thought was confined solely to the city, the Decatur paper sought to convince the members of its allegiance to the cause. For the aforementioned to be taught to the farmers and laborers without outside influence, the editorial maintained that the county Alliance needed to be fairly represented by an independent press, like the

\[^{14}\textit{Wise County Messenger}, 25\text{ April 1885.}\]
Messenger, and concluded by calling on the membership to choose a paper that would "have its heart, its hands, and all its space working in unison and sympathy with the Alliance."\textsuperscript{15}

The paper's campaign intensified as the next scheduled meeting of the county Alliance drew near. In an 11 July editorial, the \textit{Messenger} enumerated several reasons why it, and not the other county newspapers, should be selected to carry the Alliance's news. First, the press vowed that all of its space would be open to Alliance news. Second, the sole proprietor of the paper was a member of the Alliance, a statement that could not be made by any of the other papers. Third, the paper was independent and therefore would not be controlled by any group whose interests might be in opposition to those fostered by the Alliance. Fourth, the local press did not seek the position for monetary reward. Fifth, the paper would not sacrifice the farmers' interests to those of the advertising merchant class. Sixth, the paper was tied to no political party. Finally, the press maintained it had no political or personal axe to grind. Following these and its previous pronouncements, the Messenger's statement that it "unflinchingly stood squarely by the laboring class," left little doubt as to its desire to have the Alliance's business. The local paper's efforts

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
convincing the membership, and once selected, the Messenger became an important and constructive element in the county Alliance program by informing the membership of the group's activities, the first being the proceedings of the July 1885 meeting.

On 17 July, over 100 delegates representing approximately fifty local alliances met in Decatur for the county body's second quarterly meeting. Like the earlier meeting in April, the main emphasis of the meeting was on cooperative measures to aid the membership. One new venture, a trade agreement, was discussed, and one continuing venture, the Alliance cotton yards, moved closer to reality.  

The County Trade Committee, responsible for contracting with local merchants desiring to make discount sales to the Alliancemen in exchange for their patronage, reported a bid had been received from the Carpenter Rhone Company in Decatur to furnish dry goods to the membership. The delegates approved the offer and appointed a five-member committee to finalize the agreement and select an Alliance clerk to supervise operations in the store.

16 Ibid., 11 July, 1 August 1885. The Wise County Messenger served the cause of the Alliance until April 1892. *Wise County Messenger*, 14 May 1892.

17 Ibid., 18 July, 1 August 1885.

Following the approval of the trade agreement, the county Alliance delegates turned their attention to the proposed Alliance-operated cotton yard in Decatur. Both the purchase of land on which to build the organization's own facility and the possibility of utilizing an already existing yard were discussed. A committee appointed at the meeting to confer with individuals desiring to sell the Alliance land for a yard made its report, but the convention took no definite action regarding a purchase. The delegates then received a report from the original cotton yard committee appointed at the 17 April meeting. Reporting the group's only activity had been to secure propositions for existing yards, the committee withdrew and continued to hear offers from Decatur yard owners. After failing to approve two proposals, the committee approved a motion transferring considerations on the yard to the committee of the whole. Following an adjournment, the full committee reported the two proposals tabled and received another offer from C. L. Mistrot, manager of a general store in Decatur. Mistrot, in return for the members' past patronage, offered the Alliance rent-free use of a lot 100 by 200 feet, conveniently located near the railroad tracks in Decatur, for use during the upcoming season. Unable to purchase an adequate plot of land, the delegates accepted the Mistrot proposal and appointed a committee to finalize the arrangements and report on the matter to the county Alliance at the next
meeting. Before adjournment, the local body selected the second and fourth Wednesdays in each month as the dates cotton and other produce grown by members would be bulked and sold at the yard.  

While the county Alliance delegates worked to find a viable solution to the farmers' marketing problems, the convention took time to refute charges made by area pressmen that the group opposed public enterprise and the legal protection of capital. Spurred by an attack on the state Alliance journal, the Jacksboro Rural Citizen, over whether that press favored the extension of rail service into Jack County, the county Alliance went on record to denounce the charges and state it was "right and in the interest of the people of Texas to protect capital and the establishment of all legitimate enterprises in their midst." Notwithstanding the conditions in other localities, the Alliancemen of Wise County pledged their cooperation and support for the introduction of railroads and factories into the county. An indication of this support came the following year, when the Order supported Decatur citizens in their effort to secure extension of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe rails to the area.

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19Wise County Messenger, 1 August 1885.
20Ibid., 6 June, 1 August 1885.
21Ibid., 24 April 1886.
While concerned with improvements to better conditions in the county, the local Alliance's main emphasis remained on helping the membership. The following month, the delegates returned to that endeavor. Meeting in a scheduled session to finalize arrangements for the Decatur yard, the delegates decided to set aside the Mistrot offer in favor of a permanent arrangement and agreed to the purchase of land located near the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad right-of-way on which to construct the cotton weighing and bulking facility.22

County Alliance secretary J. H. Austin, in a 12 August open letter to all suballiance secretaries, informed the local members of the purchase of the land in Decatur and called upon the various alliances to contribute what each could toward the purchase price. Several days after Austin's letter, county Alliance president Jacob Brown notified the suballiance presidents of a 28 August called meeting to complete arrangements for the Decatur yard. Stating the facility needed to be fenced and a weigher appointed before operations could begin, the county Alliance president also called upon the heads of the local organizations to inform their members of the purchase and to seek the Alliancemen's vocal, as well as financial, support of the yard at the upcoming meeting.23

22 Ibid., 15 August 1885; Wise County, Texas, Deed Record, vol. 5, pp. 542-543.

23 Wise County Messenger, 15, 22 August 1885.
During the period when the cotton weighing and bulking facility to be located in Decatur kept the county Alliance active, the yards to be established at Alvord and Rhome received similar attention from suballiances in or near these two towns. On 10 August 1885, the Alvord Alliance committee of arrangements notified interested alliances of a convention to be held at that town on 22 August to perfect plans for the yard. Following the meeting and the purchase of an old cotton yard owned by Sam Silberson, the Alvord arrangement committee reported the yard was open and ready to receive cotton for sale on the second and fourth Wednesdays in each month. The committee also noted that the merchants of Alvord were in support of the town's being a shipping point, and called upon area farmers to show their encouragement by helping to pay for the yard. In the southern part of the county, nine suballiances combined to form the Farmers' Alliance Joint Stock Association, and established a cotton yard and granary in Rhome. Representatives of the association paid $100 for a site bordering the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad tracks in the town.24

While the Alvord Alliance proclaimed the merchants of the town were in support of their facility, local merchants

24 Ibid., 15 August, 12 September, 3 October 1885; Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 10 September 1885; Wise County, Texas, Deed Record, vol. 14, pp. 451-452. The nine were Rough Edge, Prairie Point, Reno, Keeter, Garvin, Deep Creek, Christian Rest, Alamo, and Dido. Wise County Messenger, 3 October 1885.
in Decatur began to worry about the Alliance project there, as evidenced by one prominent buyer's statement that the Alliance had set the proposed cotton price at twelve and one-half cents per pound. The county Alliance's journal in refuting the merchant's claims did, however, stress that "it is just what the Alliance could reasonably do if Labor was as well organized for self protection as capital..." In an effort to ease the growing fears over the facility, the Messenger in a later issue reminded the merchants that if the yard did not operate in Decatur, local farmers would take their produce to Alliance facilities in other towns. Maintaining that hundreds of bales of cotton would be lost to other markets, the Alliance journal called upon those individuals interested in seeing Decatur's trade grow to assist and not discourage the farmers in their undertaking.

On 22 September 1885, the committee on cotton yards of the county Alliance informed Wise County farmers that the yards in Decatur, Alvord, and Rhome were open and ready to accept cotton for sale, and called upon area growers to make the project a success. While hopes for success ran high,

25 *Wise County Messenger*, 15 August, 12 September 1885.
26 Ibid., 15 August 1885.
27 Ibid., 29 August 1885.
28 Ibid., 26 September 1885.
the Alliance sale in Decatur the following day did little to convey an optimistic outlook for the facility, as only twenty-five of the forty bales of cotton deposited in the yard were sold. This early setback did not, however, detract from the members' support of the Alliance projects. Decatur Allianceman I. T. Reeves, in a 28 September letter to his fellow brethren, extolled the worth of the project and challenged the membership to support the venture. Reeves, while acknowledging that participation in Alliance projects was not compulsory, called upon every member to deposit his cotton and act in unity for the good of all. Anticipating future happenings, the local farmer also urged the membership to ignore rumors they might hear concerning problems or failures at the facilities.29

Rumors like those Reeves warned against did circulate in the early days of the yards' operations. One such rumor stated that Alliance members refused 8.40¢ per pound for their cotton in Aurora and sold it for 8.375¢ at the Rhome yard. But as the county Alliance's journal quickly noted, the 8.40¢ was offered for only some of the bales, and by selling the whole lot at the lower price the farmers realized a higher profit from the sale.30

29Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 26 September 1885; Wise County Messenger, 3 October 1885.
30Wise County Messenger, 3 October 1885.
Although rumors plagued the new ventures, the occurrences at an October sale in Decatur give evidence of the true difficulty this yard labored under. On 4 October, approximately 350 bales of cotton entered Decatur for sale, with nearly 200 bales going to the Alliance yard. A buyer offered to pay 8.65¢ per pound for the Alliance cotton provided it be moved to an opposition facility. The Alliancemen, steadfast in their commitment to see the yard a success, refused to move the cotton and the sale fell through. After hearing that buyers in Gainesville were paying 8.75¢ per pound, the local farmers made inquiry of J. H. Jackson, a member of the Farmers' Alliance in Cooke County, to determine what price would be paid if the cotton were moved to that town and offered for sale. Some members wanted to move the cotton immediately, but since a reply had not been received from Jackson, the Alliancemen were persuaded to wait until the next day to make any move. That night, the farmers met to decide their plans. Shortly after the meeting convened, J. C. Carpenter, a local cotton buyer, asked to be admitted to make a proposition regarding the cotton. Carpenter told the members he would pay 8.5¢ per pound for the entire lot when the yard opened the following day. After listening to Carpenter's proposal, the body received the reply from their inquiry to the yard at Gainesville. Jackson informed the Alliancemen that 8.7¢ per pound would be paid for the cotton if it could be deposited in
Gainesville by noon the next day. But as the Wise County Messenger noted, "It was then too late." Unable to move the cotton to the Cooke County market that quickly, the Alliancemen accepted the Carpenter offer.

The operation of the Alliance's cooperative projects again became the principal topic of discussion at the county Alliance's October meeting. This being the group's first meeting after the three yards became operational, the convention discussed the ownership of the facilities and stated that the yard in Decatur was owned and operated by the full county Alliance, while both the Alvord and Rhome locations were owned and operated by suballiance unions in or near the two towns. Following this discussion and a report on the condition of the Alvord yard, the delegates formally approved the actions taken by the two suballiance unions. The delegates also called upon the presidents of the various sub-alliances to make an effort to secure financial support for the Decatur yard and again urged area farmers to utilize the facilities. In addition to cotton yard business conducted at the meeting, the delegates voted to continue the contractual agreement with the Carpenter Rhome Company for the purchase of dry goods.

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31 Ibid., 17 October 1885.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 24 October 1885.
While the county Alliance continued its persistent call for the support of the Decatur cotton yard at the October meeting, the Alliance journal in a late October editorial noted that the high hopes of some Alliance members of making Decatur an important shipping point in the northern section of the state had not been realized. The members, early in the season, envisioned that all of the cotton grown in Wise County and portions of the crops grown in Jack, Parker, Montague, and Denton counties would be marketed in Decatur.\textsuperscript{34} Cotton production in Wise County alone rose from 21 bales in 1870 to a total of 7,231 bales by 1880.\textsuperscript{35} Although cotton production in Wise County was on the increase, the Wise County Messenger maintained the Alliance yard in Decatur "has not marketed the cotton of this county, let alone any from adjacent counties."\textsuperscript{36}

The Messenger's statements, although discouraging, aptly assessed the problems surrounding the operations of the Decatur yard. Some members, however, sought to fight for the continuance of the project. At a November meeting, the Chico Alliance resolved to boycott any Decatur business that did not utilize the Alliance weighing facilities or

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., 31 October 1885.


\textsuperscript{36}Wise County Messenger, 31 October 1885.
that tried to induce prospective buyers to abstain from their use. Notwithstanding this type of effort, the troubled condition of the facility became a major topic of consideration for the county Alliance the following year. At the 15 January meeting, the assembled brethren engaged in lengthy deliberation on the Decatur cotton yard dilemma but took no meaningful action other than affirming their support for the project and expressing a desire to see the facility a success. Some discussion arose on the proposition of using the location as a grain and lumber yard in addition to its present function, but the delegates did not approve the proposal. In April, much as the group had done in January, the county Alliance only reaffirmed its support of the yard and vowed it would remain operational. The county body's persistent support was not in vain, however, as the delegates to the third quarterly meeting discovered.

Prior to the July meeting, the county Alliance's journal reported that Decatur merchants were considering a plan to resolve the problem existing between themselves and the Alliance over cotton transactions in the town. The plan, subsequently presented and agreed to by the Alliance, called for only the Alliance-owned yard to remain in operation. Merchants utilizing the facility would pay a public weigher to weigh their cotton, while cotton deposited by farmers

37Ibid., 28 November 1885, 23 January, 24 April 1886.
would be weighed free of charge.\textsuperscript{38} Eleven months after establishment of the yard in Decatur, the Wise County Alliancemen's support of the venture resulted in a substantial victory in the farmer's battle for better prices in the marketplace. Although the county Alliance project survived the challenge of the merchants, the yard did not fare well against a new and more formidable problem that engulfed the area later in the year.

In 1886 a severe drought lasting two years hit a large part of the West and Plains areas, including the Wise County area. As a result, crops and livestock died from the blazing heat and lack of water.\textsuperscript{39}

In an effort to aid area farmers hard hit by the drought, Texas Congressman S. W. T. Lanham introduced a bill in Congress during the summer calling for a $50,000 appropriation to purchase seed grains for the growers. Although the measure passed in both houses of Congress in an amended form authorizing $10,000, President Grover Cleveland declared it was the state's responsibility to provide relief, and vetoed the bill. Seeking to rectify what was believed to be a betrayal of small agrarians by the Democratic government in Washington, the state Farmers' Alliance organized a large

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 26 June, 24 July 1886.

\textsuperscript{39}Ida Huckabay, Ninety-Four Years in Jack County (Jacksboro, Texas: By the Author, 1949), pp. 272-273; McMath, \textit{Populist Vanguard}, p. 21.
relief effort to aid the affected membership. Alliancemen in areas where harvests were abundant shipped their surplus to members in the West. The state Alliance also suspended dues of alliances in Wise and other counties affected by the drought. On the local level, members in Wise County established a community fund from which cotton seed could be purchased for the membership.40

While the Alliance's relief measures proved successful in human terms, area farmers suffered the economic consequences brought about by the drought. The lack of rain in Wise County resulted in crop failures in 1886 and 188741 and the bad yields contributed to a decline in the local Alliances' cooperative endeavors. In 1886 the Alliance yard in Decatur marketed only 5,000 bales of cotton, and while improvements were initiated in 1888,42 the yard was mortgaged in early January, leased in July, and finally closed in September of 1889.43

40Huckabay, Ninety-Four Years, p. 273; Allan Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1933), p. 331; McMath, Populist Vanguard, pp. 21-22; Wise County Messenger, 6 November 1886, 8 January 1887.

41Wise County Messenger, 21 August 1886, 28 January 1888.

42Ibid., 29 January 1887, 8, 15 September 1888.

43Wise County, Texas, Deed of Trust Record, vol. 14, pp. 209-210; Wise County Messenger, 3 August, 28 September 1889.
Two additional factors also contributed to the decline of the facility. By 1889 the Alliance was again receiving competition from other weighing and shipping facilities, and when the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad broke its agreement with the body to receive and ship the members' cotton, the facility could no longer compete. Reporting on the closure, the Alliance journal aptly remarked, "It seems that this is one instance in which competition is not believed by some to be the life of trade." 44

Although some local suballiances in Wise County continued in their efforts to help the membership through collective means during the late 1880s and early 1890s, 45 the organization's direction shifted in mid-1886 much as it (the Order's course) had two years earlier. In 1884 the county Alliance experienced a transformation from a body seeking to help its membership survive in a frontier environment to one desiring to make small farmers competitive in the marketplace. In 1886 the county body became a political pressure group and some of the Alliancemen became politicians, in an effort to aid a membership becoming more concerned over their worsening economic condition.

44 Paradise Messenger, 8 February 1890; Wise County Messenger, 28 September 1889.

45 Wise County Messenger, 18 August, 22 September 1888, 11 April 1891.
While concerned with improving the financial position of small farmers, the Alliance also had several other important goals. Two of these goals were improving the social life and moral character of the membership.

Like any group residing in a frontier environment, the farmers of Wise County lacked the formal social organizations present in the more developed and affluent sections of the state. With the exception of churches and groups such as the Grange, farmers had no social life in the early 1880s. The local Alliance sought to fill the void.

Under provisions of the Alliance's constitution, membership in the organization was open to any white individual over the age of sixteen who was "a farmer, farm laborer, mechanic, country school teacher, country physician or a minister of the gospel." While blacks were expressly excluded in 1882, women had membership rights from the beginning and a number of ladies did join the Order during the early years. In April 1885, the Alvord Alliance listed the

46Constitution and By-Laws of the Farmers State Alliance of Texas, 1886 (Dallas: The Dallas Printing Company, 1886), p. 7. The membership qualifications were amended at the August 1888 meeting. After that date membership was also open to "stockraisers, mill hands—where they are in nowise connected with any union, trust, or association of their different occupations or professions that would not harmonize with the objects of the Farmers Alliance . . . ." Constitution and By-Laws of the Farmers State Alliance of Texas, 1888 (Dallas: Southern Mercury Printing House, 1888), p. 8.
names of fifteen females on the membership roll. After 1882 every Alliance member participated on an equal basis, as the Order became the only secret society without privileged classes. Prior to that date, Alliance membership consisted of three degrees with different obligations and participation rights.

In the early years of Alliance activity in Wise County, the quarterly meetings became more and more important as social events. After discussing the various items of business, the assembled delegates were treated to dinner prepared by the ladies of the town or community where the meeting was held. In 1885 the county Alliance moved its meetings to the courthouse in Decatur and farmers from all sections descended on the county seat four times a year to decide the fate of the Order and socialize.

47 Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, p. 35; Wise County Messenger, 4 April 1885.

48 Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, p. 35.

49 Paradise Messenger, 3 June, 30 December 1881; Alvord Messenger, 25 July 1884; Wise County, Texas, Minutes of Commissioners Court, vol. 1, p. 427. The quarterly meetings continued to be held in Decatur until April 1890, at which time the county Alliance secretary reported the Alliance was leaving Decatur because of contemptuous treatment at the hands of the present county officials. After this date Alliance meetings were again held in different towns in the county. Paradise Messenger, 8 March, 20 April, 26 July 1890; Wise County Messenger, 25 April, 25 July, 7 November 1891, 10 January, 2 April 1892; Minutes Wise County Farmers' Alliance, pp. 1-48 passim.
Throughout the span of Alliance activity, the county and local orders staged numerous picnics in different areas to discuss important projects, debate proposals, listen to speeches from important Alliance crusaders, and generally have a good time. An Alliance picnic at Keeter in July 1886 drew over 2,000 people to listen to speeches from the state Alliance lecturer and local Alliance officials. Dinner, dancing, refreshments, and swing rides kept those in attendance entertained for the day.50

Another grand picnic in August 1889 drew approximately six thousand people to Decatur to hear speeches from Alliance officials, including state Alliance president Evan Jones. Owing to Jones' important position, the farmers and merchants of the area went out of their way to make his visit to Decatur a memorable one. The night before the picnic, the president was serenaded by the Murphey, Bennett and Company cornet band, and the day of the picnic was treated to a parade of decorated wagons and floats leading the procession to the picnic grounds for a day of eating, socializing, and listening to speeches promoting the Alliance's cause. While more geared to education than socialization, lecture series and debates sponsored by the Alliance on important issues also served to bring the members together.51

50 Alvord Messenger, 4 April 1884; Wise County Messenger, 4 April, 15 August 1885, 10 July 1886.

51 Wise County Messenger, 7 September 1889, 30 May, 8 August, 3 October 1891.
While the county's alliances hosted a number of significant events during their existence, the most important was the 1885 state Alliance meeting. Labeled as "the largest rustic assembly to that date in Texas," 52 516 delegates, representing 600 alliances in 49 counties, came to Decatur. 53

The local Alliance journal wrote:

All through the day on Monday preceding, sturdy farmers whose faces were strange to our citizens, kept rolling into town in their wagons and hacks from many different counties, until at night our town was full of strangers. At dusk the trusty sons of toil . . . gravitated to the place of the approaching meeting . . . where several able speeches were made in the advocacy of the rights of labor. 54

The following morning T. J. McCurray, the mayor of Decatur, welcomed the delegates in what was termed a "neat address" and the convention got underway. For three days the town entertained the Alliance delegates. 55

In addition to trying to improve the social state of the farming class, the Alliance also endeavored to improve their moral fiber. Membership in the Order was restricted to individuals "of good moral character" who professed "to the existence of a Supreme Being." 56 To further instill a

53 Wise County Messenger, 8 August 1885.
54 Ibid.
56 Constitution, 1886, p. 7.
sense of moral righteousness into the Order, delegates from the beginning elected a chaplain who had the responsibility of conducting "the religious activities of the Alliance." The Alliance's mission in the area of moral stability and responsibility is best summed up in the seventh section of the Order's declaration of principles:

The brightest jewels which it [the Alliance] garners are the tears of widows and orphans, and its imperative commands are to visit the homes where lacerated hearts are bleeding; to assuage the suffering of a brother or a sister; bury the dead; care for the widows and educate the orphans; to exercise charity toward offenders; to construe words and deeds in their most favorable light, granting honesty of purpose and good intentions to others . . . . Its laws are reason and equity; its cardinal doctrines inspire purity of thought and life; its intentions are "peace on earth and good will towards man."  

The Alliance brethren in Wise County lived up to the provisions of the tenet. Local members joined in funeral processions of their fellow brethren and memorialized their passing. The local orders also helped those who could not help themselves. The Alliancemen collected monies to provide legal assistance to the members and for sisters in need. As previously noted, the members also contributed to the relief of those members hard hit by the drought in the 1880s.

57 Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, p. 21; Constitution, 1886, p. 3.
59 Wise County Messenger, 7 February, 7 March, 4 April 1885; Minutes Wise County Farmers' Alliance, pp. 1, 4, 33.
The Alliance served a useful purpose during the 1880s and 1890s by bringing the farmers together and providing social interaction and moral guidance. The meetings, picnics, rallies, and other gatherings also provided the members welcome relief from the toils of labor and the feelings of isolation.
CHAPTER III

THE ALLIANCE IN POLITICS

In 1879 the state Alliance delegates assembled at Poolville, Parker County, took care to remove the political phraseology from the Order's declaration of principles in hopes that the fate of the Lampasas area Alliance would not befall the new farmer organization. Realizing it was "impossible for party politics to invade the sanctuary of any organization . . . without perverting the original purposes of such [an] organization,"¹ the state Farmers' Alliance during its first six years of existence tried to convince the membership that a cooperative and not a political course was the right one for the farming class. The cooperative course, while achieving some success, did not solve the farmers' financial problems, and with the onset of each election year the idea of using political pressure as a means of solving these problems surfaced during Alliance meetings.

In an effort to allay political action in the upcoming elections, the delegates to the state Alliance meeting in 1882 approved a resolution calling for the Order to abstain from nominating or supporting candidates of a specific party for political office. While temporarily denied, a number of Alliancemen, including some of the members in Wise County, renewed the call for political action two years later.

At an early 1884 meeting of the Alvord Alliance, assistant county lecturer J. M. Thompson informed the assembled brethren that he believed the Alliance's worthy goals of achieving mental, moral, social, and financial benefits for the farmers would be met. Thompson added, however, that the farmers needed to be aided politically to insure attainment of their goals. To this end, the lecturer suggested that the members select a good farmer or mechanic who shared interests similar to their own and work for his election. Thompson concluded his lecture by warning the Alvord members that the farmer organization would "be burdened and crushed down" until a change in the political order occurred. Several months later another Wise County Allianceman echoed Thompson's concern for farmer participation in the political arena and observed that a unification of the farming class could lead to a reformation in local, state, and national politics.

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2 Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, p. 36.

Alliancemen in Wise County, unlike a number of their counterparts in an adjacent county\(^4\) chose not to heed these calls and declined an active roll in the political battles of 1884.

At the state Alliance meeting in Decatur in August 1885, the Order endorsed a series of resolutions that seemingly cast suspicion on the sincerity of the non-political stance of the organization. Although the convention adopted a resolution again calling upon the membership to abstain from political discussions during their meetings, the delegates endorsed resolutions calling for a union between the Alliance and the Knights of Labor, placing the Order in opposition to the whiskey tax, and putting the organization on record as being a proponent of Prohibition.\(^5\) Of the resolutions, the proposed unification of the Alliance and the Knights sparked the most interest and resulted in the most significant consequences for both the state and local bodies. While the unification of the two groups seemed natural enough, it was not without an ironic twist. Both groups had over the years endeavored to improve the economic status

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\(^4\)In neighboring Jack County, Farmers' Alliance members participated in the organization of a political party known as the Commonwealth Immigration Society. While the party did not take all the county elections in 1884, it did win control of commissioners court. Witherspoon, "Populism in Jack County," pp. 80-82.

of the laboring class. However, the means by which this improved status was to come about put the two organizations in diametrical opposition to each other. The Alliance sought free trade, cheaper goods, and lower transportation costs for its members. The Knights, on the other hand, wanted higher wages from management for its membership.  

As the Wise County Alliance's journal noted in a report on a preliminary meeting between the two groups held in Dallas in September 1885,

There are many points of similarity existing in the objects and aims of the two societies which render it possible that concerted action may be of great benefit to both in many instances, yet there are distinctive features belonging to each order which makes it impossible that the two orders should ever be entirely merged in one great body.

Notwithstanding the difficulties and complexities of such a merger, the proposal ignited a discussion on the aspect of political involvement by some of the membership. The discussions led many of the Alliance journals statewide, including the *Messenger* in Wise County, to try and explain the true political stance of the Order. An article appearing in the 29 August issue of the *Messenger* pointed out that the Alliance, while neither a political party or a trade union, was trying to accomplish for farmers and laborers what neither a political party nor the Grange had been able

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6Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 3 September 1885.
7Wise County Messenger, 5 September 1885.
to do. Stressing the Alliance's position of education on the various political questions as opposed to direct political action, the article concluded "When farmers and laborers are thus educated, true political action will naturally and inevitably follow."⁸ Some local members also cautioned about taking a new political course. A group of Alvord members asked their fellow brethren to leave political schemes alone and uphold the Order's constitution. Warning the membership not to allow politicians to make inroads, the farmers cautioned the brethren: "Beware of the sheep in wolf's clothing... Beware of those chronic office seekers, who love the 'dear people' so."⁹

The new spirit of political activism, manifested in part by the merger talks and heightened by the upcoming elections, was in evidence at the first two quarterly meetings of the Wise County Farmers' Alliance in 1886. In January the idea of partisan political participation was quickly quashed as the delegates declined to support the proposition of nominating and supporting a slate of candidates for the various county offices. To make the point clearer, the convention endorsed a resolution stating that "any effort to prostitute the Alliance to political ends was deprecated and such effort was declared to be contrary to

⁸Ibid., 29 August 1885.
⁹Ibid., 12 September 1885.
the objects and principles of the organization."10 In April the convention debated two politically-oriented resolutions. One resolution called for a change in the state Alliance constitution to allow for a greater latitude in discussion of political questions during meetings, while the second called for an immediate county-wide meeting to decide whether or not the Alliance would actively enter the political arena. After a hearty debate, the delegates narrowly defeated the two proposals.11

While the county Alliance had twice turned back challenges to the non-political character of the Order and the Alliance-oriented presses of the area warned the membership to abstain from political activity, some of the brethren kept the idea alive. In a letter to the Alliance journal, an Alvord farmer-member attacked the press and others for the view that the Alliance should retain a non-political character. This farmer maintained that the laws made by the Legislature were unfair to the farming and laboring classes, and stated that there were only two ways to achieve relief from bad laws enacted by what he termed "swindling millionaires": the ballot box or the point of a bayonet. In concluding, the farmer called upon his brethren to disregard the "old dogmas and habits the old parties harp on"

10Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 18 January 1886.
11Wise County Messenger, 24 April 1886.
and use the Alliance meetings to gain a better understanding of the members' political interests so that candidates whose views reflected those interests could be supported for public office.\textsuperscript{12}

The spirit of political insurgency surfaced again at the county Alliance meeting in July. While the convention did not endorse any measure that would allow its membership to personally participate in party politics, the delegates did adopt a stern preamble chiding the two established parties for promising the farmers relief and failing to provide it, and endorsed a series of resolutions or demands that had to be met by any candidate for national or state office seeking the votes of the county Alliance membership.\textsuperscript{13} The first two demands pertained to the leasing, selling, and taxing of land within the state. The delegates demanded that their representative work for repeal of the lease law, reservation of the state's remaining public lands for actual settlers, and taxation of corporate land holdings at full value. The third demand called for controls to be instituted on freight carriers to discourage pooling or rate discrimination, while the fourth demanded the abolition of the hiring out of convict labor to private concerns. The

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 15 May 1886.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 24 July 1886. While the county Alliance adopted the preamble and demands, the Order did not originate them. A group of laborers in Alvord advanced them the previous month. \textit{Wise County Messenger}, 10 July 1886.
Alliance, in a fifth demand, stated that the Order would support no man for the United States Senate who did not openly pledge support for the repeal of the national banking act, the free coinage of silver, the use of gold, silver, and paper money as media of exchange within the country, and the payment of debts with any medium.\(^{14}\)

While the demands were only a restatement of those advocated by anti-monopoly and soft-money crusaders in the past, their formal adoption by the Wise County Alliance and their submission to the state Alliance for consideration made the demands extremely significant.\(^{15}\) At the local level, the demands served to foster the formation of a third party in the county, which in turn divided the brethren over partisan politics. On the state level, the approval of a series of demands influenced by those passed in Wise County also resulted in a split within the Alliance ranks over political involvement.

While the county Alliance adhered to the letter if not the spirit of the constitution of the state Alliance at its July meeting, and did not support the idea of active political participation, some members chose to take that course. On 30 July a group of laborers and farmers, in reality

\(^{14}\)Ibid., 24 July 1886.

Knights of Labor members and Alliancemen, met in Decatur and formed the Laboring Mens, or as it was later known, the Anti-Monopoly party,16 with the following preamble:

Whereas, the masses of the laboring classes of the people are not represented by either of the old political parties in this county, and that they have been partly unified and strengthened by sectional appeals . . . and that their party conventions are controlled by convention manipulators, . . . and our State government has been managed in the interest of the land combinations, railroads and other monopoles . . ., their condition cannot be worsted [sic] by organizing a new party.17

After approving this preamble and endorsing a series of demands similar to those passed by the county Alliance, the convention delegates selected a full slate of nominees to run for the various district and county offices. Among the individuals nominated were several prominent Farmers' Alliance members.18 These nominations, and the convention itself, sparked a debate among the Alliancemen of Wise County over what was to be the proper position of the Order in regard to the new third party.

The division within the Alliance was further in evidence when county Alliance president John P. Humphreys announced as a candidate for state representative on the Democratic party ticket. Labeled as a "political bombshell"

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16Dallas Mercury, 6 August 1886; Wise County Messenger, 7 August, 25 September 1886.

17Wise County Messenger, 7 August 1886.

18Ibid.
by one area newspaper, the announcement fueled the battle over whether the county's Alliancemen would remain in the Democratic fold or opt for an involvement in third-party politics.

Three days after the county Alliance convention adjourned, a Chico laborer, in a letter to the Alliance journal, initiated a debate on that very question that continued for several months through the pages of the press. The laborer claimed that millionaires were forcing the Knights, the Alliance, and all other labor-oriented organizations into serfdom and maintained that the time was right for the laboring classes to use the ballot box to gain their rights. The Chico resident stated he was tired of hearing what he labeled "weakkneed" Alliance and Knight members tell the orders to work for redress of their problems through the Democratic party. While acknowledging that the Democrats had passed laws beneficial to farmers and laborers, he maintained that the measures had not been executed. To see that the necessary bills were passed and executed, this laborer called upon all others of like mind to support the labor ticket nominees.20

Allianceman Dan Shean, in a letter of response to the laborer, endeavored to set the position of the Alliance

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19 Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 5 August 1886; Dallas Morning News, 6 August 1886.

20 Wise County Messenger, 31 July 1886.
straight in regard to nominating of county officials and third-party politics. While not differing with the laborer's statements on oppressive class legislation and corruption within the old political parties, Shean blamed the people for these consequences. The Allianceman claimed the people had lost their rights through party affiliations and by letting politicians make the nominations. Shean further stated that the laborer was trying to erase the greatest lesson learned by all laborers, that the class was not political and that it was not bound to any nominee through party affiliation. While Shean maintained he, too, was in favor of a third-party movement, he stressed that he wanted "it to come out of the people, and before the people, make its platform" and chided the members of the Alliance and Knights who met in what he termed a secret meeting on 17 July to advance the idea of nominating a county ticket.\footnote{Ibid., 7 August 1886.}

Shean maintained that a call was put out to members of both orders to capture the Democratic primary convention, and through the concerted effort all but one precinct was taken. Shean related that on the day of the county Democratic convention, Alliance and Knight delegates held a conference in Decatur and voted by more than a two-thirds majority to take their seats at the convention. While in convention, the delegates unanimously endorsed a resolution stating that a county ticket would not be nominated. Shean noted that the
Alliance and Knight delegates made up over two-thirds of the delegates voting in favor of this resolution. Shean further stated that while the county Democratic convention was in progress, several of the Knights' members remained at the meeting place, and when a number of their member delegates returned and stated that the lawyers were running the convention to suit themselves, the chair ordered them back to the courthouse and told them to walk out with their fellow members. Following this order, the Allianceman claimed that the Knights' members passed one resolution to meet in Decatur on 30 July for the purpose of nominating a ticket, and another resolution to issue a call for the Alliance to take part. Shean, however, asserted that only a select few Alliancemen were invited to participate. Although Shean stated that he had solicited some of the party's nominees and would have voted for them, he vowed not to support or vote for any man that accepted the party's nomination, and maintained that "the leaders of the move have prostituted and violated the rules and principles of both orders."\(^22\)

Shean's sentiments were echoed in a letter from an Alvord Allianceman in the same issue. C. P. Simmons claimed that he and a number of other Alliancemen did not object to the nominees, but rather to the secret caucus of the Knights of Labor and Alliance members that elected them. Simmons expressed his

\(^{22}\)Ibid.
belief that a convention should have been held at a later
date, in which all laboring men were called to participate. 23

Reactions to Shean's and Simmon's criticisms came in
quickly. In a letter to the Alliance journal the following
week, a Chico farmer attacked what he labeled Knight and
Alliance "soreheads" for not supporting the labor ticket.
While acknowledging that some of the nominees did not suit
him, he professed support for the nominees and called on
every other Knight and Alliance member to support the ticket.
This farmer, like the laborer, chastised some of the members
for clinging to the old parties and asking the orders to
work through the Democratic party. The Chico resident
called upon his fellow brethren to "lay aside 'the sin that
dost so easily beset us,' which is the old party prejudice
..., and vote the labor ticket straight through." 24

In the same issue appeared another letter from a
Farmers' Alliance member at Annisville, criticizing the
actions of what he called a "faction of the F. A. in their
connection with the K. of L. in their effort to bulldoze
the people in their recent so-called convention." 25 This
member claimed that a few broken-down politicians were using
the orders to get into office, and stated that their actions

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 14 August 1886.
25 Ibid.
would only lead to defeat and disruption of the two organizations. The Annisville farmer, like Shean, maintained that in the Democratic convention the Knights of Labor and Alliance members comprised a majority, yet the delegates voted down resolutions to endorse the Knights' platform and nominate a full slate of candidates for the various county offices. The farmer also claimed that the July convention was not delayed so that more Alliancemen could attend, because the Alliancemen would not have supported the course of action. In closing, the farmer maintained that the labor ticket would come up short, because a few Republicans and fanatics could not take the elections.26

Decatur Allianceman and Anti-Monopoly Party candidate for county treasurer I. T. Reeves took the opportunity the following week to deny the accusation that he was one of the members who put the convention together to secure a nomination. Reeves stated that he was the second man to announce for the office, and was running on his own merits. The nominee further maintained that he had always opposed the idea of a nominating convention, and did not place his name or authorize anyone to place his name in nomination. Reeves asserted he was not even in Decatur on the day of the meeting, as he had been in a protracted meeting near his home for seven or eight days. Reeves, while still claiming that he opposed

26 Ibid.
the convention, stated,

I have always said that if the Alliance and K. of L. came forward in mass and said for me to go home and raise water melons, that I would do it, and if they said for me to stump the county for the ticket that I would do that . . . and I heartily accept the nomination tendered me, though it was unsought. 27

While Reeves' intent was to deny any involvement in the convention, another Allianceman sought to set the record straight on the background leading up to the convention, and the convention itself. In a 9 August letter to the Alliance journal, Allianceman and Knight member J. T. Buckaloo wrote that on or about 1 June the Chico Farmers' Alliance appointed a committee of five members and asked the local Knights to do likewise, to confer and discuss the possibility of nominating a county ticket. During this meeting, in which the committee members decided to pursue the matter, the delegates passed a resolution asking other Knights of Labor and Farmers' Alliance organizations to help, and called for a meeting to be held in Decatur on 17 July. Buckaloo maintained that the resolution was sent to every Alliance in the county and adopted by all locals the committee received replies from. 28

In regard to the 17 July meeting, Buckaloo's version differed greatly from Shean's. The Chico Allianceman

27 Ibid., 21 August 1886.
28 Ibid.
maintained that the assembled delegates voted for the delegates to go to the Democratic convention and do what they could to have their ideas heard, and adjourned to meet again at 2 o'clock that afternoon. During the meeting that afternoon, some of the delegates returned to the Knights' Hall and stated that they had been run out of the convention. After this development, Buckaloo stated, the meeting was reconvened, and the delegates, as the Knights of Labor, passed a resolution calling for the nomination of a county ticket.29

Buckaloo then attacked Shean's position on the nominating convention. Buckaloo maintained that it was Shean himself who drafted the resolution asking the various county alliances to participate in the 30 July convention, and refuted Shean's claim that few Alliancemen were involved. The Chico member stated that thirty-five of the county's sub-alliances were represented. Buckaloo, in closing, chided both Shean and the Chico laborer, who initiated the debate, for their bickering, and stated that "if all the laboring people of Wise county will lay aside party prejudice, and vote a farmers' ticket, you will find all the 'slick-haired gentlemen' willing to cast their lots with the farmers in 1888."30

Allianceman Shean, in a 23 August letter of rebuttal to Buckaloo, maintained that every word in his first letter was

29Ibid. 30Ibid.
fact, and took the opportunity to explain why he had written the resolution calling for Alliance participation in the convention. Shean maintained that he drafted the call because he felt that a majority of the Alliance members opposed a nominating convention, and that by bringing the members to the convention, they would be able to stop the move to nominate a county ticket. In one final jab, Shean attacked the 17 July conference and stated that the resulting convention on 30 July represented only a minority view of the laboring and farming classes in the county. Shean concluded by asking the coalition to stop pitting one class against the other, and called upon the leaders to return to the idea of majority rule.31

The final comment on Alliance participation in the nominating convention before the November election came from Bridgeport Allianceman John Brown. Brown, an independent candidate for county tax collector, wrote that he was also against the idea of the nominating convention and the Alliancemen's part in the coalition. This candidate stated the Alliance was established to build farmers up socially and morally, but that the debate on the question was only serving to tear the organization down. Brown called upon his fellow citizens to make their own decisions on who should be elected to office.32

31 Ibid., 28 August 1886.
32 Ibid., 4 September 1886.
While a difference in opinion on political participation was dividing the membership at the local level, a similar division was evolving at the state level. Meeting in convention at Cleburne on 3 August, state Alliance representatives from about eighty-four counties met and ultimately decided the political course of the state body. Following the election of officers for the ensuing year, two politically-oriented, yet non-committal, resolutions were introduced and approved. The first resolution stated that the Alliance would not work against any other organization that had as its objective to help relieve the plight of any class of citizen. However, the Order stated that it would not form a coalition with any other group. The second called for allowing members, as citizens, to belong to any other group, church, or political party, while the Alliance itself remained separate.\(^{33}\) While these resolutions only hinted at political involvement, the recommendations of the Committee on the Good of the Order put to rest forever the prospect of the Alliance remaining a totally non-political entity.

The Committee reported out seventeen specific articles or demands, so called because "It was agreed that there was no use in getting up petitions, because Legislators paid no

\(^{33}\) Dunning, *The Farmers' Alliance History*, pp. 40-41.
attention to them." The demands encompassed those passed by the Wise County Alliance at its July meeting, including land, railroad, taxation, and monetary reform, and an abolition of the convict-lease system. New demands, including removal of fences on public lands, prevention of speculation on farm commodity futures, establishment of a Bureau of Labor Statistics, payment of corporate employees in legal tender, and passage of an interstate commerce law were also advanced. The sixteenth demand called for a national conference of labor for the purpose of solidifying the farmer-laborer interest in their opposition to corporations, while the last demand called upon the Alliance president to appoint a three-member committee to present and press the demands on the state and national legislatures. Following a heated discussion, in which some members charged that the demands were a first step toward turning the Order into a political body, the demands passed by a small seven-vote majority.

Following adjournment of the convention, a number of those members who believed that the passage of the demands meant a political course for the Alliance met in secret to

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35 Dunning, The Farmers' Alliance History, pp. 41-42; Dallas Morning News, 8 August 1886.
determine a course to prevent turning the Order into a political machine. The dissidents decided to form a new organization using the same name as the old. Officers were elected and the members vowed to keep the new Order secret until an application for charter could be filed with the secretary of state. Secrecy was not maintained, however, and newspapers carried stories about the new organization within a week.  

Seeking to prevent a permanent break, president Andrew Dunlap of Wise County issued a call for the officers of both groups to meet at Waco in November to settle the problem. With both sides in agreement, the delegates to the Waco convention decided that the dissident group would take no further actions until a regular session of the state Alliance could be called. In return for the dissidents' concession, the regular Alliance agreed to submit for debate by the various suballiances a resolution that would label the Order non-political and allow for expulsion of any county Alliance or suballiance that allowed political discussion.

While a degree of harmony had temporarily been restored at the state level in November, the results of the battle at

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the local level in Wise County were about to be revealed. The ending of this controversy was not as rosy.

The effects of the divisive convention debate and the inability of the coalition of the Knights and Alliance to bring the laboring and farming classes together and mount a formidable challenge to the Democratic party in Wise County resulted in an overwhelming defeat of the third-party candidates in the November general election. As an example, in the race for state representative, pitting two Alliancemen against each other, Democratic candidate John Humphreys and Anti-Monopoly candidate G. R. Craft, Craft won only eight of twenty-two precincts and lost by approximately five hundred votes.38

In January 1887, the state Alliance met at Waco to resume the debate on the position of the Alliance in regard to political involvement. While emotions ran high on both sides, state Alliance Executive Committee chairman Charles W. Macune convinced the delegates to accept his plans for the Order. Macune proposed that a cooperative system for marketing crops and purchasing supplies be established to free farmers from the bonds of monopolies and organized capital. Seeing strength in numbers, Macune also called for the organization of a National Farmers' Alliance, and initiated

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38 Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Wise County, Texas, 1886, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; Wise County Messenger, 13, 20 November 1886.
efforts to merge the Texas Alliance with the Farmers' Union in Louisiana. Macune had, at least for the present, succeeded in drawing the factions back together.39

While Macune had high hopes for his marketing ventures, they did not materialize. His exchange program suffered financial problems from the beginning, and folded in 1889. The inability of the cooperative endeavor to solve the members' financial problems led a number of the more politically insurgent brethren back to the political arena.40

In 1888 a number of insurgent Farmers' Alliance members, including some of the brethren in Wise County, joined the ranks of the Union Labor party. This coalition, like the one in 1886, had little success in making inroads into the Democratic party's strength in the county or state. While the local party did not nominate a county ticket, the lack of success of the third-party movement can be seen in the county's vote for governor. In that race, the Democratic nominee, incumbent Governor Lawrence Sullivan Ross, outpolled the Union Labor candidate, former Lieutenant Governor Marion Martin, 2,365 votes to 858 votes.41


41 Ibid., p. 61; Wise County Messenger, 28 January, 23 June 1888; Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office,
Third-party involvement on the part of Alliancemen was somewhat curtailed across the state in 1890, when theDemocratic party endorsed a platform that included a plank calling for a railroad regulatory commission to stop rate discrimination within the state, and nominated the leading proponent of the plank, Attorney General James Stephen Hogg, as the party's gubernatorial nominee. With no third-party activity on the local level, several Alliancemen turned to the Republican party. This switch, however, proved to be no more productive than the third-party movements the two previous election years. Democratic candidates swept to victory in all the county's contested elections.42

Notwithstanding their past political setbacks, Alliance members continued in their search for a solution to their problems. This search led a number of Alliancemen to the People's party in the early 1890s.

Wise County, Texas, 1888, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

CHAPTER IV

THE PEOPLE'S PARTY AND THE DEMISE OF THE ALLIANCE

Many Alliancemen harbored high expectations that the election of James Stephen Hogg in 1890 would herald the beginnings of a program to improve the economic position of farmers within the state.\(^1\) Farmers, however, soon discovered this would not be the case. Although Hogg supported the Democratic party plank calling for the creation of a railroad regulatory commission, the new governor alienated a large number of the brethren by declining to appoint a trusted Allianceman to the commission after the act was passed by the state legislature in the spring of 1891.\(^2\) The Alliance fared equally as poorly with the new legislature.

After the 1890 election, the state Alliance, in an effort to form a bridge to the new administration and lawmakers, established a committee to act as liaison between the Alliance and the governor, the state house, and the state


\(^2\)Alwyn Barr, Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876-1906 (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1971), pp. 119, 121; Martin, People's Party, p. 36.
senate. The committee, however, soon discovered that the legislature, including some of the Order's own members, was not going to support the programs and policies advocated by the Alliance.³

While the actions, or more precisely lack of action, by the governor and legislature on issues important to the Alliance disturbed some of the more politically active members, it was Hogg's and the Democratic party's unwillingness to accept the subtreasury plan that ultimately drove Alliancemcn from the party. The plan, introduced at the 1889 meeting of the National Farmer's Alliance and Industrial Union in St. Louis, by Texas Alliancemcn Charles W. Macune, and adopted by the delegates, sought to alleviate the problems of the farmer's having to buy supplies from local merchants under a two-price system, and sell his crops during a depressed economy at the time of harvest. The proposal called for the federal government to establish subtreasuries and warehouse facilities in each of the nation's counties that yielded over $500,000 in agricultural produce annually. As proposed, farmers utilizing these facilities would be able to deposit their crops in the warehouse and draw up to eighty percent of the market value of the crops from the subtreasury in legal tender at a low interest rate. The farmer, upon placing his crops in the facility,

³Martin, People's Party, p. 36.
would receive a certificate of deposit which he could sell when the market price suited him. Once the certificate was sold, the purchaser would repay the subtreasury the amount advanced to the farmer plus interest and receive the crops.4

On 4 March 1891 a group of Alliance friends of Governor Hogg in the legislature issued a statement that later came to be known as the "Austin Manifesto." This document included a stern denunciation of the subtreasury and of the Alliance's legislative committee for trying to push the Order into the political arena and toward the establishment of a third party.5

The manifesto created a deep division within the Alliance between those members who supported Governor Hogg and the brethren who supported the actions of the legislative committee in their endeavor to garner support for the Alliance's programs. On 10 July 1891 anti-subtreasury Alliance members met in convention at Fort Worth. During that convention the delegates went so far as to organize a new Alliance that embodied that principle. Denied entry into this convention, pro-subtreasury members also met in Fort


5Martin, People's Party, pp. 36-37; Barr, Reconstruction to Reform, p. 126; Goodwyn, Democratic Promise, p. 235.
Worth the same day and vowed to fully support the plan. The actions of the pro-subtreasury members were ratified by the delegates to the regular state Alliance meeting in August 1891, as that group refused to hear the views of the anti-subtreasury delegates in attendance and voted unanimously to support the plan.6

The Alliance brethren in Wise County, as might be expected from their past political involvement, chose to take their stand with the pro-subtreasury, politically insurgent wing of the Order. While the local Alliance journal warned the members that some Democrats were trying to take over the Order in an effort to hold the brethren within the party, and cautioned the membership to "guard the portals" of the Alliance,7 county Alliance secretary John T. Sanford reported that the sentiment of the members' meeting in April would not allow this to happen. Sanford stated:

Our people have been educated up to the point where we can say, farewell forever to our past partisan political affiliations. . . . Our people now recognize the fact that they are in this great order for life, and the influences of political intrigue or party caucus can avail nothing when brought to bear against us. . . . We recognize the fact that the ballot box is our most potent weapon. . . . The Alliances have repented for the past, and will in the future vote for principle not party. . . . All Alliance men and all outside the Alliance, who are not knaves or fools know that the Democratic and

7Wise County Messenger, 14 February 1891.
Republican parties have united upon a policy to perpetuate our present condition. Neither party offers the people any relief, and from their past record we know that if they should, it would be only a plot to get our votes. . . . The Alliance is too well educated to be fooled by their tricks. 3

While Sanford maintained that the Alliance would no longer look to the established parties for help, the convention itself passed a series of resolutions that bolstered the local Order's insurgent position against the Democratic party. In the first, the assembled delegates condemned the instigators and signers of the "Austin Manifesto" for criticizing the subtreasury plan and for falsely accusing the Alliance leaders of fraud. The resolution claimed the document was nothing more than "political intrigue gotten up in a party caucus, having as its purpose the destruction of the Alliance in Texas." 9

The convention delegates, in another resolution, criticized one of the leading Democrats in the state, Congressman Roger Q. Mills of Corsicana, for a speech delivered in Austin assailing all labor organizations in the country. The assembled brethren called upon all organizations, and especially their representatives from Texas' Fifth Congressional District, to work for the defeat of Mills in his upcoming bid for Speaker of the House. The resolution maintained that Mill's speech was made to better his position

8Ibid., 25 April 1891.

9Ibid.
with Wall Street monopolists, and that if he were elected, all free silver bills would be relegated to the rear of the bills introduced and buried in unfavorable committees.\textsuperscript{10}

The spirit of the county Alliance remained unchanged during the next few months. At the July meeting, delegates gave their unanimous approval to the National Farmers' Alliance demands passed at Ocala, Florida, in December 1890, the subtreasury plan, and the actions of the May 1891 Cincinnati reform convention that led to the creation of the People's party. The county body also criticized the Alliance members of the legislature for their anti-Order actions, and Sam Dixon, editor of the Alliance journal Southern Mercury and Hogg supporter, for his favoritism toward the railroads. Dixon had ignored the subtreasury question during the election and had played up Hogg and the railroad commission.\textsuperscript{11}

While the Alliancemen of Wise County favored the subtreasury plan, the insurgent faction within the state Order endeavored to gain support for the plan and win members away from the Democratic party. After the Democratic state convention in 1890 failed to incorporate the plan into its platform, Alliance insurgents organized a lecture series to take the message to the people.\textsuperscript{12} In Wise County, the local Order initiated a series of debates on the proposal.

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 25 July 1891; McMath, Populist Vanguard, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{12}McMath, Populist Vanguard, p. 99.
The first of these debates was held in conjunction with an Alliance picnic at Rhome in early July 1891. Former Democratic State Representative and moderate Allianceman George B. Pickett spoke first, outlined the fallacies of the subtreasury scheme, and lauded the efforts of the Democratic party in seeking relief for the farming class. In reply, Colonel B. Morris extolled the worth of the plan and upheld the political character of the plan's author, Macune. ¹³

The following month another debate on the subtreasury and third-party questions took place at Paradise, and pitted Representative Pickett against Alliance veteran S. O. Daws. Daws spoke for two hours in support of the Alliance and the various programs of the Order. Pickett, speaking in opposition to the Alliance's part in the third-party movement, stated "that the Alliance had perjured itself [and added] that the Democratic party was for the people and their interest . . . "¹⁴ and had always cast their votes in the interest of the people. In summing up this debate, a local reporter wrote, "Daws sustained the Alliance, Pickett failed to injure it, but injured himself and is less popular with

¹³Wise County Messenger, 8 August 1891.
¹⁴Ibid.
the people."\textsuperscript{15} Whatever the results, this debate set the stage for a more significant one a few days later.

On 8 August, Democratic Congressman Joseph W. Bailey of Gainesville and Harry Tracy, a member of the Alliance's legislative committee, met in debate at the reunion grounds in Decatur. Tracy, leading off the debate, maintained that the subtreasury was necessary to get more money into circulation, and denied the claim that the act constituted class legislation favoring the farmers. Tracy claimed that when farmers benefited, all classes benefited. In regard to the third-party question and Alliance participation in the movement, Tracy stated "that it was a fine thing where [sic] the Farmers' Alliance stayed in the political back yard and ate the bones thrown it, but when it desired to sit on the front porch and entertain them the politicians make a kick."\textsuperscript{16}

Representative Bailey, in his response, blamed the Republican party for the country's financial problems. The Congressman stated the Democratic party had tried for over thirty years to make changes, and that when the party was about to do so, the subtreasury issue and third-party rhetoric appeared. Bailey maintained that from 1846 to 1860 the citizenry enjoyed a democratic tariff, free silver, and an

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid. The debates did not injure Pickett seriously as he was again elected to the state house in 1892. Texas, Legislature, \textit{Members of the Texas Legislature, 1846-1962} (n.p., n.d.), p. 115.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Dallas Morning News}, 9 August 1891.
economical government, and claimed that the same conditions would exist again if the Democrats were in control. Bailey added that the country's financial problems would be remedied by reducing the tariff, curtailing government expenses, and increasing the circulating medium.17

Press reactions to this debate were mixed. The local Alliance paper stated that those in attendance were split in their sentiments, while another area press stated that Bailey had the crowd on its feet and applauding wildly before he concluded, and "gave the subtreasury plan a black eye . . . that it will take many speeches from state lecturers to heal."18

In the following month, Alliance pro-subtreasury advocates took a clear victory. In a debate between Representative Pickett and Alliance secretary Sanford at Perrin schoolhouse, the crowd so enthusiastically supported Sanford's position that Pickett refused to discuss the matter further.19

While Alliancemen debated the subtreasury question, the county Alliance at its October 1891 meeting took a solid stand on the marketing question. The delegates, while acknowledging that a depressed economic condition and limited money supply existed all over the nation, resolved that the Order would not enter into contracts to deliver their crops

17 Ibid.
18 Wise County Messenger, 15 August 1891; Dallas Morning News, 9 August 1891.
19 Wise County Messenger, 3 October 1891.
to market on 1 October. The Alliance claimed that a sale on that date allowed cotton speculators to rob the farmers of their just profits. The Alliance stated that it would enter into no contract with merchants payable before 1 December.20 Although the Alliance again sought a solution to its economic problem through cooperative means, the problems did not disappear and the farmers continued to suffer. This suffering brought some of the brethren back to the political arena in 1892.

Based on the county Alliance's political actions during the late 1880s, and the acceptance of the insurgent wing's philosophy in 1891, it was not surprising that a number of Alliancemen were involved in the introduction of the People's party into the county in early 1892.21 The county Alliance, as a body, and a majority of the members had claimed on numerous prior occasions that the Democratic party had not fully addressed the problems of the farming class. The People's party, embracing the major legislative demands of the Alliance, was looked upon as a vehicle through which the Order's programs could be brought to realization.

While a number of Alliancemen were already committed to the new party, additional efforts were taken to recruit more members from the Order. At a citizens' meeting held at Hopewell Church on 21 February 1892, J. M. Sanders noted the

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20 Ibid., 7 November 1891.
21 Ibid., 6 February 1892.
Alliance had made demands on Congress to pass laws favorable to the laboring and farming men and stated he hoped the Order would continue in its efforts. However, Sanders asked "the Alliance [to] drop into the People's party and elect new men" if their demands were not met before the fall elections.

At least one local suballiance did drop into the party. In a meeting of the Pleasant Valley Alliance on 7 May 1892, twenty-one members pledged their support to the St. Louis demands of the People's party.

Alliance support of the ticket in Wise County did not go unnoticed. One paper, in calling for the party to make their nominees known, stated that if they did not, "Democrats will say this county ticket is a 'dark-lantern ticket, cut and dried' in the oath-bound councils of the Alliance." Support from the county Alliance members notwithstanding, the People's party ticket proved unable, like the third-party efforts in 1886 and 1888, to take the county from the Democratic victory column. People's party candidates won only three county elections (one commissioner's race and two justice of the peace races) and lost the gubernatorial election by approximately one thousand votes.

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22Ibid., 27 February 1892.  
23Ibid.  
24Ibid., 14 May 1892.  
25Ibid., 28 May 1892.  
26Ibid., 19 November 1892; Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Wise County, Texas, 1892, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.
Although defeated, the Alliancemen of Wise County continued to blame the Democratic party for their economic plight. At the April 1893 meeting, the county Alliance condemned the actions of the state's two United States Senators, Richard Coke and Roger Mills, for voting against the Hatch Anti-Option bill, and the state legislature for sustaining their actions. This bill, introduced by Representative William H. Hatch of Missouri in April 1892, called for the licensing of and a special tax on dealers in crop options and futures. The Alliance, in denouncing the votes, claimed the bill was in direct opposition to the money class and in the direct interest of agriculture.27

Twice during the next three meetings, the delegates called upon President Grover Cleveland to resign. The latter call for resignation was prompted by what the Alliance charged was Cleveland's combining with Wall Street railroads and interfering in the 1893 Virginia state elections. They denounced what they believed to be Cleveland's actions in the matter "as a crime Againts [sic] the true Ballot Or a fair count and a Long Step towards Monarchey [sic] and the Wreck and Ruin of all Our free Institutions With[in] our Republican form of Government."28

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28 Minutes Wise County Farmers' Alliance, pp. 8, 14.
delegates at the January 1894 meeting also voiced their displeasure over a proposal by Treasury Secretary John G. Carlisle to issue $200 million in gold bonds.²⁹

The monetary system of the United States experienced serious problems in the late 1880s and early 1890s. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, forced upon the Republicans by western senators in return for their support of the McKinley tariff bill, called for the government to buy 4.5 million ounces of silver each month and issue legal tender notes to pay for the bullion. The redemption of these notes could be made in either gold or silver. This stipulation led many holders to redeem their notes for gold, which in turn led to a decline in the gold reserves. In early 1893, the gold reserves reached desperately low levels, and on 22 April 1893, the reserves fell below the accepted safe point of $100 million. This fueled the run on gold reserves and drove more currency out of circulation.³⁰

In an effort to improve the depressed condition, President Cleveland and "gold men" in Congress pushed for a repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. Despite the efforts of western agrarians in Congress, the act was repealed in October of 1893. The repeal did not, however,


have the expected results of pulling the country out of the panic. In response to deepening economic problems, Secretary Carlisle called upon and received authorization from Congress to allow him to issue $200 million in gold bonds.\textsuperscript{31}

This proposal, however, drew criticism from those who maintained that only the rich would profit from the sale of the bonds. Alliancemen in Wise County adhered to the "rich get richer and the poor get poorer" axiom. As an alternative, the brethren called upon their representatives to vote against the proposal and support the issuance of $200 million in paper money.\textsuperscript{32}

In 1894, some of the county's Alliancemen again turned to the Populist party in search of a solution to their problems. Although the county's vote totals showed a slim victory of People's party gubernatorial candidate, Thomas L. Nugent, and the election of several nominees of the party on the district and county level, the victories were not enough to cut into the Democratic party's strength.\textsuperscript{33}

While the Democratic party showed no ill effects from the People's party challenge, the same could not be said for the effect the People's party was having on the local

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., pp. 465-466.
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 466; Minutes Wise County Farmers' Alliance, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{33}Election Returns, Secretary of State's Office, Wise County, Texas, 1894, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 9, 13 November 1894.
Alliance. Although the People's party showed well in Wise County in 1894, some members of the Farmers' Alliance at the first meeting in 1895 tried to discourage the party in the county, possibly for the sake of their own organization. The Committee on the Good of the Order, while maintaining the Alliance was not dead or dying, called for the brethren to discourage the organization of Populist clubs. The committee stated the clubs were a detriment to the growth and interest in the Order. 34

The local movement was not dead; however, it was in a severe decline. In October of 1893, thirteen suballiances were represented at the county meeting. This number had declined to nine by the following year. The delegates chose to stand with the party, however, amended the report of the committee, and deleted the clause calling for the discouragement of Populist clubs. 35

The Alliance also took a stand on a local political issue at the April meeting. In the early morning hours of 8 January 1895, the county courthouse burned. During the meeting, the delegates passed a report in the form of a series of resolutions concerning the construction of a new facility. The report stated the Alliance wanted the new courthouse constructed from native stone, that the facility

34 Minutes Wise County Farmers' Alliance, p. 28.
35 Ibid., pp. 11-13, 28.
should be fireproof to reduce the risk of another fire and to lower insurance rates, and that bids be let on both native and out-of-county construction materials, so that the costs of each would be known. The committee appointed to meet and discuss the matter with the commissioners' court did not convince that body; the new courthouse was constructed from stone quarried in Burnet, Texas. 36

Although the Alliance continued to voice its opinions on the questions and issues at hand, the fact that the Alliance was in a period of decline was evident during the latter part of 1895 and early 1896. In October the delegates authorized the appointment of a lecturer to organize and reorganize the county. The reorganization efforts were limited, and only one new suballiance showed on the record books from April to July of 1896. 37 Seeming to sense its own demise, the Order approved the following resolution offered by the Bethel Alliance at the July meeting:

We the Members of the Farmers Alliance . . . Do Resolve In Our harts [sic] to continue to be advocates and Members . . . Just as long as We can have as many as a Quorum at Our Respective Sub Alliances. Knowing as We Do that a continuation of the Farmers Alliance is Nessesary [sic] in this Government to Watch Political Parties and Proclaim to the People Every Move that Will in our Judgment be Special favortism [sic] to the
few . . . and Knowing that the Majority of leaders of all Political Parties Do become corrupt . . . as the Parties Grow Old thuse [sic] Making a New Party Nessesary [sic] Every few Decades . . . and Knowing of [sic] Political Reform Ever comes to the People of these United States through the Party known as the Peoples Party it Will [be] the Result on [sic] What the farmers alliance have [sic] done in the Past. The Peoples Party its self being the outcome Or One of the Results of the farmers alliance . . . by ajitating [sic] and arousing the People [and] Educating them to a Knowledge of the conditions. 38

The delegates again vowed to uphold the principles of the Order and refused to unite with any enemy of the Alliance or with any organization that did not endorse all the Alliance demands. 39

The Alliance in Wise County, as evidenced by the resolution, had incredible discernment of the Order's role in effecting political reform through the evolution of the People's party in the 1890s. Their stoic adherence to the hard-line political position changed, however, as the decline in the Alliance continued.

Only six suballiances sent representatives to the 16 October county meeting. 40 Despite the small turnout, the Committee on the Good of the Order stated there was "the best of feeling existing among the Brotherhood," 41 and suggested that the Order build on this feeling by instructing

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38 Ibid., pp. 37-38.
39 Ibid., p. 39.
40 Ibid., p. 42.
41 Ibid., p. 43.
the county and state lectures to inform the public at every possible opportunity that the Alliance was not a partisan political body and that the Order did not control the political view of any member. The committee further stated that the people should be told that the Alliance was a school to teach responsibility and cooperation. To promote the idea of the Alliance's being an education institution, the committee suggested a lecture bureau be established to select questions of importance for discussion at local meetings.42

Although the county Alliance called for a return to the original purpose of the Order, an educational and cooperative organization, a number of the insurgent members still looked to the People's party as the farmers' salvation. The county election results of 1896 did little, however, to uphold that view. Unlike the 1894 election, no Populist candidate won a district or county-wide office and the county's voters gave overwhelming support to the reelection of Democratic Governor Charles A. Culberson.43

Following the election, the county Alliance continued in its endeavor to regroup, return to the non-political cooperative society of the early 1880s, and build up the Order. The efforts, however, had little success. The county Alliance met only twice after the October meeting.

42Ibid., pp. 43-44.
43Wise County Messenger, 13 March 1896; Wise County, Texas, Election Record, vol. 2, pp. 2-10.
During these meetings, the Alliance's only action of substance was to arrange for the sale of the land purchased in 1885 for the Decatur cotton yard.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{44}Minutes Wise County Farmers' Alliance, pp. 46, 48.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Farmers' Alliance in Wise County, from the time the first subordinate Alliance was organized near Salt Creek (near Cottondale) in April 1880\(^1\) until the final Alliance meeting at Bethel in April 1897,\(^2\) provided an invaluable service to the small farmers in the county. While the Alliance was not always successful in its undertakings, it did alleviate the problems encountered by farmers in the 1880s and 1890s.

The county, heavily agricultural, settled mainly by small farmers and experiencing those problems common to a frontier area, provided a fertile breeding ground for the Alliance cause in the early 1880s. Small agrarians in the county readily adopted the Alliance's professed ends of improving the financial, mental, moral, and social conditions of the farming class. While all of the goals were important, financial betterment became the ultimate objective. Local members, using first the means of cooperating in business ventures and later taking to the stump in political battles, endeavored to improve their position.

\(^1\)Paradise Messenger, 30 April 1880.

\(^2\)Minutes Wise County Farmers' Alliance, p. 48.
The Alliancemen of the county were in the forefront of the movement in north Texas from the beginning. Local members participated in chartering the Order and continued to serve the cause throughout the local organization's seventeen year existence. In the early years local members aided in writing the constitution, by-laws, and secret work of the Order. Later local members took to the field to spread the Alliance's cause to farmers in other Texas counties and across the South. Early leadership in the state movement also came from the local membership. As previously noted, in the first seven annual elections, a Wise County Allianceman was elected to the presidency six times. Another local member served as a second vice-president in the National Farmers' Alliance organized at Waco in 1887.

In addition to providing organization and leadership to the cause, Wise County Alliancemen contributed greatly in fostering and implementing programs to aid the membership. The county Alliance was the first to initiate cooperative programs, including bulk sales and cotton and produce sale facilities, designed to aid the membership financially. While the local farmers experienced both victories and defeats in their undertakings, the successful programs did prove that small farmers could compete in the marketplace,

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and more importantly, they provided short-term financial relief. This trailblazing by the local alliances in the county led other Alliancemen across Texas to try similar programs. Some of these proved more successful.\footnote{For details on Alliance programs in other areas of the state, see McMath, \textit{Populist Vanguard}, p. 19.}

Cooperative projects gave way to political activism in 1886. Small farmers, believing they had been betrayed by the two dominant political parties, sought to exert their influence through the ballot box. This pressure took two forms: first they made demands on the existing parties for reforms, and secondly they established or adopted a third party.

As they were in cooperative endeavors, Wise County Alliancemen were at the forefront of the activist movement within the Alliance. The politically oriented demands adopted by the county Alliance at its July 1886 meeting propelled the local Order into partisan politics. Additionally, the demands served as a basis for the seventeen demands advanced by the state Alliance at the Cleburne state meeting in August 1886. While efforts were made at this meeting and at later meetings to diminish the effects of the demands, they nevertheless marked the beginning and charted the course of the Alliance's political activity. Many of
these demands ultimately became principal planks in the People's Party platform in the 1890s.5

While the Alliance of Wise County was in the political fight from the beginning, insurgent local members found themselves unable to convince all of their brethren to turn to third-party politics as a means of solving their financial problems. The county was a Democratic stronghold prior to the introduction of the organization, and remained so throughout the period of Alliance activity, with the exception of the 1894 election. Local members were unable to present a unified front against the Democratic party, and split in every election where third-party candidates appeared on the ballot. Many farmers in Wise County, like those all across the South, could not bring themselves to bolt from the party that had redeemed the region from the grip of Radical Reconstruction. Alliancemen who were members of the Democratic party constantly called upon their brethren to work for redress of their problems through the old party.

While the insurgent Alliancemen in Wise and other counties had little success in winning victories at the polls, they were able to influence Democratic party politics. A number of the reform demands advanced by the Alliance were

eventually adopted by the Democrats. The Alliance kept the issues before the people, and their efforts paid off.

In the final analysis, the Alliance's programs and political battles to improve the financial position of the farming class had few successes. Small farmers found it extremely difficult to compete with and against merchants, buyers, railroads, and the dominant Democratic party.

While financial betterment ultimately became the main goal of the Order, the other three goals, of mental, moral, and social improvement, were not neglected. At times, these needs proved to be just as important as the financial ones. The Alliance's achievements in these areas were more substantial. Through the meetings, rallies, lectures, debates, and picnics, the Alliance provided previously unavailable educational opportunities and social interaction for the members. In the area of moral responsibility, the Alliance endeavored to strengthen the character of members and involved them in the betterment of mankind. If for no other reason, the Alliance was beneficial in that it brought farmers together and provided relief from the daily routine of farm life.

\[6\text{Winkler, Platforms of Political Parties, pp. 340-341, 385-388.}\]
APPENDIX A

TEXAS STATE FARMERS' ALLIANCE OFFICIALS, 1880-1887

1 January 1880 to 16 July 1880

W. T. Baggett, President
J. N. Montgomery, Vice-President
J. H. Dover, Secretary
Geo. McKibben, Assistant Secretary
G. B. (or R.) Patton, Lecturer
A. E. Robertson, Assistant Doorkeeper
John W. Sullivan, Treasurer
William Shaddle, Doorkeeper
J. F. Hood, Chaplain
C. C. Pope, Assistant Chaplain

16 July 1880 to 6 August 1880

W. T. Baggett, President
L. G. Oxford, Vice-President
J. H. Dover, Secretary
G. W. Bond, Assistant Secretary
J. W. Sullivan, Treasurer
J. A. Culwell, Lecturer
J. C. Gilliland, Assistant Lecturer
J. S. Welch, Doorkeeper
J. N. Montgomery, Assistant Doorkeeper

6 August 1880 to 9 August 1881

J. N. Montgomery, President
W. T. Baggett, Vice-President
J. H. Dover, Secretary
L. G. Oxford, Lecturer
Andy Dunlap, Assistant Lecturer
John W. Sullivan, Treasurer
W. G. Thompson, Assistant Doorkeeper
J. C. Gilliland, Assistant Secretary
J. S. Welch, Doorkeeper
9 August 1881 to 8 August 1882

*Andy Dunlap, President
W. L. Garvin, Vice-President
C. M. Wilcox, Secretary
B. G. Gilliland, Treasurer
D. B. Gilliland, Lecturer
W. A. Denton, Assistant Lecturer
W. H. Pierce (or Pearce), Doorkeeper
W. P. Dent, Assistant Doorkeeper

8 August 1882 to 7 August 1883

*Andy Dunlap, President
A. M. Chandler, Vice-President
C. M. Wilcox, Secretary
B. G. Gilliland, Treasurer
S. O. Daws, Lecturer
P. M. Hodges, Assistant Lecturer
T. B. Smith, Chaplain
C. S. Maddox, Doorkeeper
H. F. Austin, Assistant Doorkeeper

7 August 1883 to 5 August 1884

**W. L. Garvin, President
J. A. "Doc" Culwell, Vice-President
C. M. Wilcox, Secretary
P. M. Hodges, Treasurer
W. C. West, Chaplain
Dr. Riley, Lecturer
C. S. Maddox, Doorkeeper
J. Davenport, Assistant Doorkeeper
R. F. Creekmore, Assistant Lecturer

5 August 1884 to 4 August 1885

*J. A. Culwell, President
J. C. McConnell (or McConnel), Vice-President
Andy Dunlap, Secretary
Jake (or Jacob) Brown, Treasurer
W. R. Lamb, Lecturer
Reeves, Assistant Lecturer
J. R. Masters, Chaplain
Wallace, Doorkeeper
J. W. Patterson, Assistant Doorkeeper
S. O. Daws, Lecturer-at-Large
4 August 1885 to 3 August 1886

*A. Dunlap, President
J. S. Morris, Vice-President
C. M. Wilcox, Secretary
J. A. Landers, Treasurer
J. H. Jackson, Chaplain
G. W. Belcher, Lecturer
Z. S. Lee, Assistant Lecturer
Acker, Doorkeeper
Lyons, Assistant Doorkeeper

3 August 1886 to August 1887

*A. Dunlap, President***
D. J. Eddleman, Vice-President***
H. G. Moore, Secretary
J. A. Landers, Treasurer
J. M. Brooks, Chaplain
G. W. Belcher, Lecturer

*Wise County Alliancemen elected state Alliance president.

**Elected as Wise County Allianceman and subsequently moved to Jack County in the fall of 1883.

***Resigned from office in November 1886.

APPENDIX B

WISE COUNTY FARMERS' ALLIANCE OFFICERS, 1880-1897

1880-1881
W. L. Garvin, President

1881-1882
W. L. Garvin, President
J. D. Ensey, Vice-President
O. G. Peterson, Secretary
I. C. Pond, Treasurer
Doc Culwell, Lecturer
S. O. Daws, Assistant Lecturer
T. J. Scott, Doorkeeper
Joe McIlhaney, Assistant Doorkeeper
Reverend J. H. Miller, Chaplain

1882-1883
J. A. Culwell, President
I. C. Pond, Secretary

1884-1885
J. J. Gaut, President
I. T. Reeves, Vice-President
W. A. Miller, Secretary
T. J. Early, Treasurer
W. B. Austin, Chaplain
John Wallace, Doorkeeper
J. H. Vashtine, Assistant Doorkeeper

1885-1886
Jacob Brown, President
J. J. Gaut, Vice-President
John Austin, Secretary (died in office and replaced by I. T. Reeves)
R. B. Gaut, Lecturer
George Wilton, Assistant Lecturer
T. J. Early, Treasurer
M. B. Rhodes (or Rhoads), Chaplain
J. H. (or John) Wallace, Doorkeeper
John Vashtine, Assistant Doorkeeper

1886-1887

John P. Humphreys, President
L. S. Adair, Vice-President
J. T. Holt, Secretary
T. J. Early, Treasurer
G. R. Craft, Lecturer
J. B. Dabney, Assistant Lecturer
T. B. Duncan, Chaplain
L. E. Gorbet, Doorkeeper
T. B. Burrow, Assistant Doorkeeper
J. B. Nall, Sergeant-at-Arms

1887-1888

I. T. Reeves, President
J. W. Patterson, Vice-President

1888-1889

J. W. Patterson, President
W. G. Foster, Vice-President
C. Crozier, Treasurer
J. T. Sanford, Secretary
W. M. Durham, Chaplain
D. L. Barker, Lecturer
Geo. R. Craft, Assistant Lecturer

1889-1890

Jno. W. Patterson, President
Jno. T. Sanford, Secretary

1890-1891

J. Fullingham, President
J. T. Sanford, Secretary
C. Crozier, Treasurer
Doc Culwell, State Alliance Representative
1891-1892
J. W. Patterson, President
Jon. T. Sanford, Secretary
C. Crozier, Treasurer
Doc Culwell, State Alliance Representative

1892-1893
J. W. Patterson, President
J. T. Dennie, Vice-President
R. A. Paschall, Secretary

1893-1894
J. A. Culwell, President
H. G. Culwell, Vice-President
R. A. Paschall, Secretary
C. Crozier, Treasurer
J. B. Dabney, Chaplain
John T. Sanford, Lecturer
Ed Maddox, Assistant Lecturer
W. C. Collins, Doorkeeper
S. 0. Daws, Assistant Doorkeeper
T. W. Sanford, State Alliance Representative
Dan Shean, Alliance Business Agent

1894-1895
J. A. Culwell, President
H. G. Culwell, Vice-President
R. A. Paschall, Secretary
P. L. Jordan, Chaplain
C. Crozier, Treasurer
S. O. Daws, Lecturer
Dan Shean, Assistant Lecturer
W. C. Collins, Doorkeeper
W. R. Grisham, Assistant Doorkeeper
B. F. Williamson, State Alliance Representative

1895-1896
J. A. Culwell, President
D. C. Huddleston, Vice-President
C. Crozier, Treasurer
R. A. Paschall, Secretary
J. B. Dabney, Chaplain
F. B. Whorton, Lecturer
J. W. Ford, Assistant Lecturer
W. C. Collins, Doorkeeper
J. R. Hobby, Assistant Doorkeeper
B. F. Williamson, State Alliance Representative

1896-1897

Jake Brown, President
John Gilliland, Vice-President
R. A. Paschall, Secretary-Treasurer
A. Edwards, Lecturer
J. A. Penn, Chaplain
F. J. Barton, Assistant Lecturer
J. R. Hobby, Doorkeeper
W. C. Collins, Assistant Doorkeeper
Tom Sanford, State Alliance Representative

Sources: Paradise Messenger, 1880-1881; Wise County Messenger, 1883, 1885-1892; Minutes Wise County Farmers’ Alliance.
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