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In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

POPULIST-REPUBLICAN FUSION, 1894

Probably the hardest fought political battle in Cleveland County between candidates of the two parties for county offices was in 1894, when the fight was between the long entrenched Democrats and the newly formed Populist party.

There was many a heartsick Democrat in Cleveland County on the night of the first Tuesday in November, 1894, when the election returns showed that several of the nominees of the Populists had majorities over the old line Democrats.

Populist Jacob Hugh Quinn, candidate for Clerk of the Superior Court, had a small majority over Democrat Thomas D. Lattimore, who had held that office for about 20 years. Populist James B. Byers candidate for county treasurer, had a small majority over Democrat John S. Wray, who had been in office almost as long as T. D. Lattimore had. Populist Frank S. Fortenberry, candidate for sheriff, showed a fair majority over Democrat N. M. Hamrick, who had been sheriff since 1884. Democrat J. F. Williams, who had served as

register of deeds since 1888, was re-elected. Populist L. L. Smith was elected to the House of Representatives over Capt. E. D. Dickson. Republican Jule B. Fortune and Populist Jas. Y. Hamrick were elected to the State Senate over Democrats Dr. T. B. Twitty and R. B. Miller.

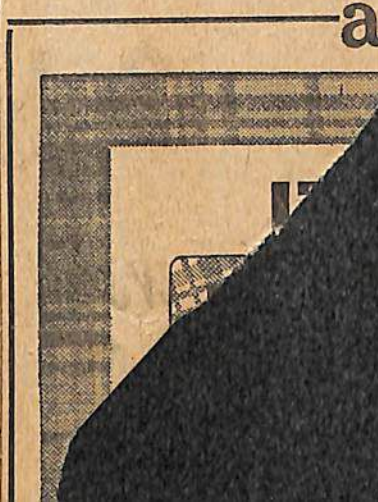
When the ballots were counted at the close of election day, the election judges certified that Jacob H. Quinn had a majority of three votes over T. D. Lattimore; and that Jas. B. Byers had about the same majority over John S. Wray.

However, two days later, when the Election Board met to certify the returns, the second count showed that Democrat T. D. Lattimore had a majority of five votes over J. H. Quinn, and Democrat John S. Wray had a majority of four votes over "Jim" Byers. The Election Board accepted this second count, and Lattimore and Wray were declared duly elected. (Did somebody open the allegedly sealed ballot boxes and change a few votes

to give Democratic victory?)
QUINN-LATTIMORE LAW SUIT

The Populists immediately gave notice that they would contest the election of these two county officials, alleging fraud. However,

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John S. Wray declined to take the matter to court, and withdrew in favor of "Jim" Byers. Many of Mr. Lattimore's friends felt it would be wise to let the Populist nominee have the office. Other hot-headed Democrats urged that he fight for the office to which they alleged he had been legally elected.

After long and bitter and expensive litigation through several courts, the verdict was in favor of Populist J. H. Quinn. The court held that the majority of three votes for Quinn which the board had certified on election night was correct count, and he was legally elected clerk of the court for Cleveland County. The litigation had consumed two and one-half years, and there was only 18 months of the four-year term remaining. Quinn did serve those 18 months most acceptably. In 1898, Capt. L. J. Hoyle, Democrat, was elected clerk and served for many years.

Since the court held that Quinn had been legally elected, the costs of litigation fell heavily on Lattimore. In addition to these costs he had to pay to Quinn all the fees collected by the clerk's office during the two and one-half years.

When Jas. Y. Hamrick and Jule B. Fortune went to the State Senate in 1895 each took with him his son to serve as a page. The two boys, Fred D. Hamrick and Ralph Fortune, were each paid \$1.00 a day for services. The Democrats complained bitterly of nepotism. Each of these men was re-elected in 1896. J. Y. Hamrick was later appointed by Governor Russel to a four-year term as State Commissioner of Labor and Printing.

THE POPULIST PARTY

What was this Populist party, also referred to as the People's Party, the Third Party, and occasionally as the Fusionists?

The answer is, it was made up of a union of Alliance Democrats who had bolted the regular Democratic party, and Republicans.

What had happened that these lifelong Democrats, a few of them Confederate veterans, and many of

them sons of Confederate veterans, who had heretofore hated the Republicans, calling them "black Republicans" or "d-radicals", had joined forces with these heretofore scorned Republicans? For the first 40 years after the War Between the States party feeling was far more intense than it is now, and the name "Republican" was anathema to the majority of Democrats.

A socially prominent Shelby woman (born in the 1860's) said to me not long since: "Mamie, I would not vote for my own husband, whom I admire very much, if he were running for office on the Republican ticket. This, not because the Republicans under Abraham Lincoln made war on the South, but because of the indignities and humiliation to which the South and its people were subjected under so-called Reconstruction by Republicans and Carpetbaggers after the fighting had stopped."

THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE

The Populist Party had its inception in the National Farmers Alliance and Industrial Union, a labor organization. The organization in North Carolina did not set out to be a political party. Its original purpose was to help the farmers toward better farming methods and seed selection, very much as our local farm agent assists the farmers in this county. But since the state was almost wholly agricultural, the Alliance had become a power in North Carolina politics by 1890.

In an effort to save money, the farmers tried cooperative buying through the Alliance. In other words, they made the Alliance their merchant and the organization bought goods at wholesale prices, in large quantities, and sold them to the farmers at cost, plus a small percentage.

Recently, I wrote of a fire in Shelby in 1889, when the warehouse of J. S. Groves & Co. was burned, and with it supplies belonging to the Farmers Alliance. Groves was the duly appointed agent of the Alliance. I am told he was supposed to handle their goods, allowing himself a 10 percent profit. Later, it was found that he was making a far greater than 10 percent profit, by having two bills of

lading, one of them false.

THE CLEVELAND ADMINISTRATION

Grover Cleveland, elected President of the USA by Democrats, entered on his second term as president in March, 1893. By 1894 "the attitude of the Cleveland administration toward the coinage of silver, and the prevailing low price of farm products, had driven from its support all those interested in agriculture." Cleveland further alienated the Democrats of the South by appointing a Negro named Crumb as Collector of Port of Customs at Charleston, S. C.

The nation was in a panic. Whereas, in 1890 cotton had sold for nine cents a pound, it was selling in 1894 for less than five cents a pound. Farmers were not making enough to live on and could not pay their taxes.

MARION BUTLER'S LEADERSHIP

By 1894, the Farmers Alliance had become a mighty political force. They were demanding the enactment of certain legislation. Some of these demands had to do with coinage of silver, the gold standard, an increase in the amount of money in circulation "to at least \$50.00 per person." "That the government shall establish sub-treasuries, or depositories, in several states which shall loan money direct to the people at . . . interest not to exceed two percent per annum on non-perishable farm products, and also upon real estate."

Marion Butler, a brilliant young lawyer of Clinton, N. C., had become president of the North Carolina branch of the Alliance in 1891. Through his paper, the Progressive Farmer, he was able to convince a majority of the voters of agricultural North Carolina that the only way the farmer could get a better deal was to elect and send as representatives to the State Legislature, and to the United States Senate and Congress, men who were thoroughly in sympathy with the farmer's aims and needs. He convinced the voters that this could be accomplished through a union or fusion of the Alliance with the Republican party. The ultimate result was that Mr. Butler got himself elected United States Senator, as a Populist.

ALLIANCE DEMOCRATS BOLT CONVENTION

In the spring of 1894, the Cleveland County Democratic Convention held its regular meeting in Blanton's Hall, John F. Schenck (or was it R. L. Ryburn) presiding. The Alliance group attended. They had said they did not want to form a separate party in Cleveland County "if the town ring would treat them right." In those days there was a great deal of jealousy between folks that lived in the country and folks that lived in Shelby.

When the delegates to the State Convention were elected the Alliance crowd was not satisfied, and the group left the hall, went to the courthouse, and with John Ance Roberts as one of their leaders, and with J. H. Quinn who had been serving for several years as Alliance lecturer, assisting, set up a county organization of their own.

Later, they made a fusion agreement with the Republicans, and put out a ticket for county offices, some of the candidates being Republicans and some of the candidates being Alliance Democrats. The results were those stated at the beginning of this story.

In this convention bolt the local Democrats were following the example of Alliance Democrats all

constructive uses of atomic energy.

over the state of North Carolina.

In the election of 1896 the fusion was continued. But that year Populist Frank Fortenbury was defeated by A. B. Suttle in the race for sheriff.

In the state election in 1896 Daniel L. Russell was elected Governor of North Carolina through the combined vote of the Republicans and Populists.

Four years later, in 1900, the old line Democrats were again in power, in this county and in the state, and elected Charles B. Aycock governor in a red shirt campaign for white supremacy.

Most of the reforms demanded by the Alliance have now become laws.

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STATEMENT OF THE OWNERS

Management, as required by the Acts of August 24, 1911, and the Acts of August 2, 1946, Code, Sections 27-1-1, 27-1-2, 27-1-3, 27-1-4, 27-1-5, 27-1-6, 27-1-7, 27-1-8, 27-1-9, 27-1-10, 27-1-11, 27-1-12, 27-1-13, 27-1-14, 27-1-15, 27-1-16, 27-1-17, 27-1-18, 27-1-19, 27-1-20, 27-1-21, 27-1-22, 27-1-23, 27-1-24, 27-1-25, 27-1-26, 27-1-27, 27-1-28, 27-1-29, 27-1-30, 27-1-31, 27-1-32, 27-1-33, 27-1-34, 27-1-35, 27-1-36, 27-1-37, 27-1-38, 27-1-39, 27-1-40, 27-1-41, 27-1-42, 27-1-43, 27-1-44, 27-1-45, 27-1-46, 27-1-47, 27-1-48, 27-1-49, 27-1-50, 27-1-51, 27-1-52, 27-1-53, 27-1-54, 27-1-55, 27-1-56, 27-1-57, 27-1-58, 27-1-59, 27-1-60, 27-1-61, 27-1-62, 27-1-63, 27-1-64, 27-1-65, 27-1-66, 27-1-67, 27-1-68, 27-1-69, 27-1-70, 27-1-71, 27-1-72, 27-1-73, 27-1-74, 27-1-75, 27-1-76, 27-1-77, 27-1-78, 27-1-79, 27-1-80, 27-1-81, 27-1-82, 27-1-83, 27-1-84, 27-1-85, 27-1-86, 27-1-87, 27-1-88, 27-1-89, 27-1-90, 27-1-91, 27-1-92, 27-1-93, 27-1-94, 27-1-95, 27-1-96, 27-1-97, 27-1-98, 27-1-99, 27-1-100.