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Limits of power: the 1890 Ocala Convention of the National Farmers’ Alliance

Dan Bertwell

Editor’s Note: The following article, dealing with events in Ocala, Florida, extends somewhat beyond the submission guidelines for The Sunland Tribune. However, these events had far-reaching consequences for politics and agriculture throughout Central Florida, especially in the agrarian areas of Hillsborough County, and it is felt that readers will gain valuable insight about subsequent local affairs from Bertwell’s analysis.

In Ocala, Florida on December 2, 1890, members of the National Farmers’ Alliance and Industrial Union held their second annual meeting.1 In his introductory remarks, Alliance President L.L. Polk articulated the fundamental purpose of the movement and the meeting. Polk underscored the need to overcome divisions between people and groups from different sections of the nation. He hoped the National Alliance would demonstrate, through “harmonious action and thoroughly fraternal cooperation,” that they could overcome the rift and “meet the demands of patriotic duty in the spirit of equity and justice.”2

Polk’s appeal did not fall on deaf ears. The Ocala Convention successfully united separate Farmers’ Alliances from around the United States. Unfortunately, the unification of this national movement did not bring all its members together. Although the Alliance merged along sectional lines; reuniting North and South, this encouraged the exclusion of African-American members of separate “Colored Alliances.”3 Women’s marginal role further encouraged the formation of a movement that allowed non-white, non-male members to participate within separate spheres, but excluded them to mostly peripheral roles. Despite their excluded status, women and African-Americans negotiated social and political roles inside the convention, asserting power in subtle ways. Overall, the Ocala Convention manifested racial and gendered limits that nineteenth-century reform movements placed on participation, and the distribution of power, as well as the intrinsic paternalism of reform. The convention experience also indicated ways disempowered groups subverted these restrictions.

Members of the Florida Farmers’ Alliance hoped the convention would induce more farmers to join their cause while “selling” the state of Florida in the national press as a destination for travel or permanent settlement. According to historian Robert McMath, “The Florida Alliance had developed an aggressive cooperative marketing network (complete with a New York office) in an effort to direct the state’s agricultural growth toward the interest of family farmers.”4 Along with the Ocala Convention, Florida Alliance members held a concurrent “Semi-Tropical Exposition,” specifically created to portray positive aspects of Florida culture.5 Divided into four sections, the exposition showcased cultural and agricultural products from central, south, and west Florida; it also included a “Ladies’ Department” display. Spectators strolled through gardens, rode children’s rides, watched horse races, and viewed livestock exhibitions.6

Originally slated to meet in Jacksonville,
directors of the Florida Farmers' Alliance learned that the small, central Florida city of Ocala could provide more financial incentives.7 The people of Ocala, like the Florida Farmers' Alliance, viewed the event as a welcome opportunity to bring attention to their area, an influx of tourists, money and prestige. An Ocala Banner article addressed the event's importance, stating “All eyes are turned to Ocala. Ocala's supreme moment has come and we must be equal to the occasion.”8

With delegates representing as many as “thirty states and well over a million farmers,” the convention brought together a heterogeneous body of people.9 But the different alliances represented were not as united as they seemed. Schisms existed between Western Alliances (whose members wished to unite into a distinct and powerful third party), and the Southern Alliances (whose members sought to work with the Democratic Party).10 The Ocala Convention occurred at an organizationally charged moment for the National Alliance.11 Not only were the various alliances striving to work within a national framework, but more radical members needed to restrain themselves, fearing openness might antagonize conservative elements within the movement.12

In the end, delegates settled their respective differences and drew up a list of demands. The “Ocala Demands” formed the foundation of the Populist Party in the United States and helped establish the movement’s direction. According to historian Gene Clanton, the Ocala Demands, in part, caused virulent white supremacists and “economically conservative” members to abandon the movement.13 In spite of the event’s importance, most historiography of the Ocala Convention has focused on the resulting list of grievances rather than the convention itself. As a closer look at the convention reveals, the debate over the demands was not the only potentially divisive issue at the convention.14 In order to foster unity between those who sought the creation of a third party and those who wished to work within the existing political system, the delegates reached a compromise. At Ocala, the Farmers’ Alliances suspended any consideration of third party formation until February of 1892, both sowing the seeds of unity for what would become the Populist Party and setting the tone for their movement’s future. Historian John B. Clark stated in 1927 that the Ocala delegates drew up a platform “around which the political history” of the entire United States “revolved for several succeeding years.”15 Despite the importance of the demands, Clark described the convention experience in just one paragraph.

The historiography of populism generally is of two types: regional history or national overview. Regional historians center on a particular area, generally a state. Because of this limited focus they treat the Ocala convention as a point of reference. For example, Barton Shaw’s The Wool Hat Boys: Georgia’s Populist Party, dedicated three sentences to the Ocala convention:

Thus when the national leaders of the order gathered in Ocala, Florida, in 1890, Livingston lobbied for a new platform. By the end of the meeting, the Alliance had dropped its demand for government ownership of the railroads in favor of government regulation. Having changed the philosophy of the national organization, Livingston returned to Georgia and tightened his hold over his own Alliance.16

This depiction of the Ocala Convention is indicative of most historical literature. The convention is rarely discussed in great detail. Historians interpret the Ocala Demands’ impact on a specific section of the Populist movement and relegate the convention to little more than a peripheral event. The experience itself is rarely mentioned, despite frequent references to the resultant demands.

Scholarship which has focused specifically on populism in Florida is limited and contemporary historical concerns have not been incorporated. Authors dealing with the issue have discussed the events surrounding the convention, but not the convention’s implications. These works provide a narrative of the day-to-day happenings in Ocala and the political platform adopted, but do not incorporate any analysis of gender, race or class.17

Whether scholarly monographs mull over regional divides in the national movement, racial inclusion (or exclusion) in populism, or class consciousness among farmers, their common thread is a lack of consideration for the Ocala Convention’s depth or breadth. None of the histories consider the convention itself or the distribution of power along gendered and racial lines in the populist movement. In Beyond
“Digging Potatoes, Federal Point, Fla.” This 1912 postcard shows farm workers harvesting the crop in rural Hillsborough County. (Courtesy of Tampa Historical Society.)

Labor’s Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor, historian Robert Weir has argued that while national histories should consider the Knights of Labor “as a totality,” they fail to adequately incorporate subtle differences from region to region. Weir also believes that the “gilded age working class was not monolithic” and historians must consider the presence of “multiple working class cultures.” 18 Although Weir analysis focused on the Knights of Labor and not the Populist Party or Farmers’ Alliances, his discussion of multiple working class cultures — with divergent interests, goals, and plans — can be applied to the various Farmers’ Alliances around the nation. While regional histories fail to understand the populist movement on a national scale, national histories do not adequately incorporate sectional difference. Regional and national histories of populism are limited by their focus; one sacrifices national unity, another provincial specificity.

The contemporary historiography of the event represents African American men and white women in different ways. 19 Little historical work has considered the implications of women’s presence at the convention; while most contemplation of the African-American males’ roles revolves around their impact on the white men of the Alliance. Because of conflicting views between Alliances concerning racial inclusion, historians represent black men as a divisive force that could have created a rift between the white members on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line. In fact, most reconciliation during the Ocala Convention occurred between former Union and Confederate soldiers who promised to set aside the sectional strife of their collective past, rather than associate along racial or gendered lines. The figurative bridge-building between these former foes failed to encourage either a greater black presence at the convention or women’s involvement outside of traditional roles.

Bridging former Union and former Confederate sympathizers was a main goal established from the outset of the convention. The opening speaker, Florida Governor Francis P. Fleming, described his experience as a wounded Confederate veteran just after the Civil War journeying north to New York City. Governor Fleming noted that the Yankees treated him well, with no enmity. He intended to remember this courtesy, he said, extending it to those who came to Florida. Governor Fleming believed the “bloody chasm” between North and South “largely existed in the minds of professional politicians and sensational newspaper men,” and it had been spanned by all the people present at the convention. 20

The perception that re-unification was necessary appeared in both national and
local newspapers. The New York Times referred to the destruction of sectional divisions as “perhaps the most important service” that the Alliance and the convention could perform. The Ocala Banner reported a reunion of veterans that took place during the convention. This meeting, which the paper deemed “the most pleasant and interesting feature of the great gathering,” consisted of both sides facing one another in columns. Rather than meeting with fixed bayonets, the two sides met with hands extended and “a most hearty hand shaking was indulged over an imaginary chasm.” The band then played a medley of “Yankee Doodle Dandy” and “Dixie,” followed by speeches from veterans on both sides. Speakers reaffirmed their respect for the valor of former enemies; a Union veteran stated that Southern courage “was an honor to the ‘Lost Cause’” and one former Confederate soldier reassured the audience that he “loved the valor and courage of the Union soldier, and the harder he fought, the more he loved him.” Southern speakers articulated their relief that the slaves had been freed and both sides agreed that the Alliance could help “obliterate all traces of bitterness” between the former foes.

Throughout the convention the “shadow of the Civil War” remained relevant and in many ways affected events as they unfolded.

Even non-members of the Alliance perceived a change in North/South interaction. Terrence Powderly, Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, received considerable media attention while in Ocala. His speech during the convention pointed to the difference between the Sub-Tropical Exposition and an exposition in New Orleans five years earlier. Northern newspapers had charged that the New Orleans Exposition glorified southern culture and ignored national reunification. Powderly told the crowd that the Sub-Tropical Exposition seemed different, and he believed Southerners had truly forgotten and “forever buried” the sectionalism that had separated the two groups. Powderly further argued that the convention itself represented “a living protest against what incendiary politicians charge against you for their own base purposes.” He related a conversation with Semi-Tropical Exposition President George Wilson. Powderly asked Wilson if the convention had any “relief of the rebellion,” or anything “suggesting the lost cause.” Wilson “scratched his head and answered ‘well, really, we had forgotten that.’” Powderly believed people in the South had truly moved beyond the Civil War and reiterated that the two former antagonists were united once again.

While disagreements existed, unification of farmers around the nation still seemed to be the main goal of the convention. Delegate W.S. McAllister of Mississippi declared that only through a “holy war against sectionalism” could farmers exert the power and influence necessary to keep their movement strong. By uniting the Alliances across the Mason-Dixon Line and ignoring racial divisions, the National Alliance excluded minority groups from an equal footing in the movement. Reconciliation between Union and Confederate adherents superseded the interests of black Alliance members.

Just before the convention, The Farmers’ Advocate wrote that the “interests of the people of the west and the south are identical, and their political forces must be consolidated against the power of corporate greed.”26 Progressive Farmer wrote an open letter to all other reform publications, hoping that at the “great, grand meeting” in Ocala, farmers would join into one organization to “make common cause against a common danger.”27 It seemed farmers around the nation agreed that they shared common goals and interests, but had very different views as to how their goals could be achieved.

By merging the two regions, convention-goers hoped to answer the “chief question” they faced: whether to form a third [political] party or work inside the present political framework. Delegates from various Western Alliances, particularly Kansas, posed the “third party” question most forcefully. Southern Alliances found that they exerted their greatest influence when voting for Democratic candidates who promised to represent alliance interests. These men recognized the power of the Democratic Party in the South, found success working inside the Democratic Party, and knew Democratic candidates held similar views concerning racial issues. Clanton argued, “There was still a Mason-Dixon line on the alliance map, and a racial one as well,” and according to “white-southern logic” the Southern Alliance needed to be certain that reform through the Democratic
Party was impossible. Once the Democratic option had been invalided, remaining southern populists would embrace the third party movement.  

It is difficult to define the relationship between Farmers’ Alliances and their African American members. Blight believes that because the alliance movement opposed the power of banks, railroads and other business endeavors, and stood against oligarchy and privilege, their members would have held beliefs contrary to the myth of the “lost cause.” By bringing African Americans to the political forefront, populists threatened traditional southern racial, political, and social norms. The Southern Alliance did not admit black members, but exerted an inordinate amount of influence over parallel “Colored Alliances.” One difference between those in favor of a third party and those opposed was the viewpoint concerning the black vote, reflecting Western desire for black voter support and Southern desire to retain the racial status quo. Put simply, those in favor of the third party movement tended to seek out and encourage African-American voting and those in favor of working within the system discouraged it. This desire to encourage black voting did not translate to inclusive views of racial interaction. Anna Rochester, author of The Populist Movement in the United States, finds no clear indication that the Populists wanted to make the black vote a central issue, but many supporters of the third party movement wanted to protect the black right to vote.

The historiography of race and populism reflects a contest between the populist movement’s theoretical ideals and the restrictions of contemporary society. Historian Norman Pollack has argued that different states interpreted the “Negro question” in different ways and, at least on a national level, populists were interested in helping members of both races. The Ocala Demands and the third party question separated conservative elements from the populist movement. Although many (if not most) of the members were racist, populist policies tended to be more racially progressive than other political groups. Historians Jack Abramowitz and Robert Saunders contend that populists were less racist than non-populists; while historian C. Vann Woodward believes that the Democratic appeal to racism forced populists to downplay the issue of racial equality among potential political allies. Essentially, these arguments underscore the that, while populists were progressive for their time, they were still products of their time. They acted on political expediency and economic issues, rather than racial ones.

At the convention, members of the Colored Alliance participated almost ex-
clusively as non-voting “observers.” This opportunity allowed the races to “symbolically albeit futilely” extend a hand to one another.\textsuperscript{38} Colored Alliance members voted within group meetings to oppose or support National Alliance amendments, but this voice held little sway with white Alliance men. Limited representation did exist for at least one member of the Colored Alliance. John A. Sawyer, an African-American delegate from North Carolina, served on the “most important committee-platform and resolutions.” Sawyer needed money to get back to his home state, so other delegates provided funds and encouraged him to speak. “Being the only delegate from an important southern Alliance state whose whites had shunned the convention” and perhaps “the only representative of his race serving as a delegate,” Sawyer told the convention that his people “were willing to follow the lead of the whites,” but asked, “For God’s sake not to lead them astray.”\textsuperscript{19} The presence of one exception does not negate the exclusionary practices of the convention, but underscores that distribution of power, no matter how lopsided, never falls completely to one side. The ambiguous role of Colored Alliance delegates echoed their role in the populist movement, American politics, and in the entire society.

The National Colored Alliance seemed overwhelmed by the National Alliance. On December fourth, the Florida Times Union reported that the Colored Alliance had been “in session all day” but “transacted no business of importance.” The delegates were “awaiting the action of the national alliance on fraternal relations with other bodies.”\textsuperscript{40} The next day the same paper reported that the Colored Alliance had censured the actions of the National (white) Alliance for passing a resolution opposed to the federal election bill: “Because such action has no reference whatever to the aims and purposes of the organization and was calculated to check the growth and influence of the alliance.” The same day the Colored Alliance was “ready to be received for fraternal greetings,” but their reception was postponed, with no reason given.\textsuperscript{41} On December fifth, the Colored Alliance’s resolutions were similar to the previous day’s, with “the principal change” being the “elimination of the paragraph criticizing and denouncing the white national alliance for its action.”\textsuperscript{42} The Weekly Floridian reported that white and black opposition over a bill constituted further “evidence that the races cannot be made to fraternize,” and that African-Americans were “ignorant,” “suspicious of,” and “prejudiced against whites.” It seemed to the author that things would “never be different until the negro can be made to understand that what is good for the white man is best for the negro.”\textsuperscript{43}

According to historians Irvin Winsboro and Moses Musoke, white populists offered African-Americans “optimism and the Populist rhetoric of camaraderie,” but the 1890s produced “no discernable solidarity between whites and blacks in the agrarian south.” White Alliance members made overtures to their black neighbors, but “eschewed meaningful and permanent black participation” in the political apparatus.\textsuperscript{44} The experiences of John Sawyer and the entire Colored Alliance support Winsboro and Musoke’s assertion that black farmers believed the alliance movement may “erase, or at least ease, the despised color line” but “recognized the harsh reality that the Populists’ reform agenda excluded substantive changes to the code of white supremacy.”\textsuperscript{45}

White delegates were confined by their social reality and viewed African-Americans paternalistically, as second-class citizens. Louisiana Populist M.H. Brian did not seem concerned with African-American involvement in the populist movement. A southern supporter of the ‘third party’ option, Brian told a reporter that the people he represented also supported the third party and could “manage the colored men in the Alliance very well.” He and his constituents were “not a bit frightened about negro supremacy.”\textsuperscript{46} Surely, Brian understood that southern Democrats held views which supported the traditional racial divide; but he also felt that the white members could subjugate Colored Alliances with little effort and African-Americans would welcome white leadership. Historian Bruce Palmer argues that populists around the South used racist language freely and regularly with little qualification, an unsurprising observation considering the social norms in the late nineteenth-century South.\textsuperscript{47} Alliance members (especially in the South), it may be supposed, acted out of a racist paternalism present in their time and not a genuine dedication to a belief in black equality.\textsuperscript{48}

According to Palmer, paternalism “al-
Mechanization enabled the citrus industry in Florida to meet burgeoning demand and employ thousands of workers. This c.1910 postcard displays “modern” packing house. (Courtesy of Tampa Historical Society.)

allowed a greater degree of flexibility in rearranging relations between black and white but “was based ultimately on a racism as strong as the other more explicitly racist approaches contemporary with it.”49 In The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that “differentiation...is dependent upon disgust,” believing that divisions between social purity and social hybridization became a necessary element in the act of exclusion. Although Stallybrass and White discuss the European bourgeoisie, their arguments may apply to the exclusion of African Americans at the Ocala convention. Members of the white Alliances felt they had more in common with other white populists, regardless of region, than they had with members of Colored Alliances.50

Gendered roles and women’s space at the Ocala Convention belied the complexity of relationships and human interaction. In her seminal work Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, historian Joan Wallach Scott argues that “the term ‘gender’ suggests that relations between the sexes are a primary aspect of social organization.” Scott further argues that historians must “imburse the expanding production of discourses on sex in the field of multiple and mobile power relations.” In this context, a seemingly straightforward case of exclusion becomes complicated by social organization and the dispersal of power.51 Relationships of power and the concept of citizenship complicate any gendered analysis of the Ocala Convention. Women asserted a role inside the convention but did not subvert male authority in any meaningful way that could be immediately recognized.

For women, exclusion from political action did not represent a break from tradition, but a continuation of their gendered experience. Historian Nancy Isenberg argues that women “had the appearance of citizenship but lacked the basic rights to be real citizens.” Isenberg has written that political dialogue in the late nineteenth century separated women into two classes: either those who symbolized weakness or immorality. This created a “contradiction between social and political equality” and limited women’s real equality with men.52 This understanding of (in)equality applies to the female role at the Ocala Convention. While few would argue that the Ocala delegates treated women as immoral, their role at the convention demonstrates the limited social and political forays women could, at the time, make into the “realms of men.”
Additionally, it illustrates their means of interaction inside social space.

Women's sphere at the convention represented the limited access to power symbolized in segregated space. The Alliance Exposition relegated women's role to a separate "Ladies' Department," effectively minimizing their influence on the proceedings. Even in the historical record of the event, women and blacks are segregated, both from each other and from reports of the convention generally. Contemporary newspapers of the time set articles concerning "ladies' issues" and "colored issues" apart from one another, making any integration between the two difficult despite the fact that they would have interacted on some level. Despite their segregated status, the female presence at the convention also illustrated their importance in the agrarian economy. Mrs. E.A. Dyke of Leon County managed the Ladies' Exhibit at the Semi-Tropical Exposition. Not only did Mrs. Dyke "very credibly" represent Leon County, she also presented "as fine a collection of ladies' handwork as was ever seen in Florida."⁵³ Mrs. Dyke's department was "visited daily by numbers of ladies and gentlemen" and the manager took great "delight in showing them around and talking up Leon County."⁵⁴

Any woman in the city or the county was "cordially invited to visit and take an interest in the Ladies' Exchange" and all were welcome to "make articles of any kind either fancy or plain" for sale.⁵⁵ Items entered for exhibit or sale included "a beautiful silk crazy quilt," fruit preserves, a "crayon drawing" which was "a genuine specimen of art," eggplant, canned fruits, oil and water color paintings, blackberry wine, embroidery work and bananas.⁵⁶ Although participation in the convention restricted farmer's wives inside traditional gender definitions, these were representative of women's position in the nineteenth-century agrarian economy. Women played an active and vital role in the management and success of family farms. Despite the lack of representation in governmental action, the treatment of women at the Ocala Convention resembled their experiences at home. This resemblance reinforced their status as non-voting, but important, workers without whom the farms could not run. By main-

Turpentine collection near Wauchole, in the early 1920s. A spin-off of the lumber industry, turpentine augmented other Florida forestry produce. (Courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)
taining what they perceived as ‘proper’ gender relationships, convention organizers upheld the social order.

African Americans and women were relegated to a particular sphere, but they successfully subverted it in some cases. According to the Florida Times Union, there were eighty-eight voting members present at the convention. In addition to these, there were “456 more visiting alliance men from outside of the state, including alternates and women, and all these can attend the deliberations of the council.” The paper counted five women amongst these non-voting delegates, including vice-president of the Kansas alliance Fannie Vickery.57

There is little information concerning Fannie Vickery in the historical record, but according to the Ocala Banner she had “gained an enviable reputation as a fluent and captivating campaign speaker” during the Kansas elections earlier in the year and she closed the Saturday speeches “in a manner that pleased and cheered all who drank in her inspiring and eloquent words.”58 Earlier in the week Vickery had taken part in a debate concerning the inclusion of women in the alliance. Mrs. Neville, another Kansas delegate, put forth a resolution to “place women on an equal footing with men as to initiation fees etc.,” and Vickery “offered an amendment to strike the word ‘male’ ” from the constitution. Colonel Livingston, a Georgia delegate, contended that women were included in the legal use of the word ‘man,’ but men were excluded by the use of the word ‘woman.’ Mrs. King, from Florida, replied that “women should be on equal footing with men; that man without woman would degenerate and decrease.” Male delegates ended the conversation because “it was fast assuming a woman’s rights discussion,” and there was a limit to male alliance-men’s willingness to discuss women’s issues.59

Like John Sawyer’s inclusion in the convention, the roles of Fannie Vickery and other women did not reflect a broad power base, but illustrated the imbalance of power in the late nineteenth century. The experiences of women and African-Americans at the Ocala Convention illuminated the many limitations of nineteenth-century reform. The white male leadership of Farmers’ Al-
liances kept white women and black men peripheral in different ways. Officially segregated into a female “Ladies Department,” women had a definite place to exert limited influence and celebrate their contributions to society. Female delegates, non-voting but invited to speak, had little real authority in the proceedings but symbolic gains in their representation. African-Americans occupied ambiguous space within the convention, without a specific place and with little power to shape their own future, or the movement’s.

Winsboro and Musoke point to a “dearth of primary sources” in the historical record concerning African Americans in the populist movement.60 This also applies to women’s role in the movement. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that “the presences and absences embodied in sources or archives are neither neutral nor natural. They are created. As such, they are not mere presences and absences, but mentions or silences of various kinds and degrees.”61 Trouillot’s conception of historical silencing, (structured absences in the historical record), applies to the voices of African-American men and white women at the Ocala Convention. White men treated both groups paternalistically, believing that white male direction would properly steer the rest of society. This viewpoint, when applied to historiography, silenced under-represented groups “because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded.”62 The two groups subsumed in the Anglo, male-dominated press accounts, voting records and sources have been left out of the Ocala Convention. African Americans and women had some space inside the convention, but it was limited and malleable, conditions pointing to larger issues involving gender, race and inclusion-innineteenth-century social reform. Any non-white and non-male reformers who wished to work inside the Farmers’ Alliance movement were restricted by nineteenth-century relationships of power.

ENDNOTES

1. The meeting is also occasionally referred to as the meeting of “the National Alliance Supreme Council Meeting,” “the Populist Convention,” the Alliance Convention,” and the “Ocala Convention.” For the sake of uniformity, I will be using the term “Ocala Convention” in this paper.
2. Florida Times Union, 2 December 1890, 1:2.
3. The designation of “North” and “South” is correct when understood as a reification of those who fought in the Civil War, Union and Confederate. It may prove confusing for the reader as Northern (at least Northeastern) Alliances were weak and the real re-unification was between Western and Southern Alliances.
7. Between a share of gate receipts, reduced or free travel and lodging, plus other financial considerations, Jacksonville offered around $8,000 and Ocala offered around $15,000. Proctor, 162-3.
8. The Ocala Banner, 4 July 1890, as quoted in Proctor, 163.
9. Lawrence Goodwyn, The Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 226. Historian Gene Clanton believes there may have been even more farmers represented, he estimates that the delegates represented thirty states and “perhaps as many as one and a half million farmers;” see also Gene Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 58. The Weekly Floridian, 3 December 1890, writes that thirty-five states were represented. The most definitive list seems to be that from the Florida Times Union, 3 December 1890, which appears as Appendix B.
11. The movement had been sectional until the first National Meeting St. Louis on December 3, 1889. McMath, American Populism, 108.
14. The “Ocala Demands” are sometimes referred to as the “Ocala Platform,” see Appendix A for a complete list of the Ocala Demands.
17. The three works on the Florida Alliance are: James Andrew Mead, “The Populist Party in Florida” (M.A. diss., Florida Atlantic University, 1971), and the already cited Cory and Proctor pieces.
19. No references to African-American women were ever specifically uncovered in the research for this
work, therefore any reference to African-Americans implies they are men and any reference to women implies they are white.


23. Clanton, *Populism: The Humane Preference*, 67. Historian David Blight’s work, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, illustrated the effects of the Civil War on race relations and his arguments illustrate some reasons former Confederate and Union soldiers unified at the Ocala Convention. Blight argued that three different visions of Civil War memory collided in the years following Appomattox: reconciliationist, white supremacist and emancipatorist. In the late nineteenth century, white supremacist thought combined with white reconciliationism and overwhelmed the emancipatorist vision which would have underscored African American humanity and equality. In order to re-unify the nation, Americans faced the Herculean task of understanding and combining both “healing and justice,” but divergent definitions of the former abounded in the south and “for many whites, especially veterans and their family members, healing from the war was simply not the same proposition as doing justice to the four million emancipated slaves and their descendants.” Southerners and former slaves knew of the rift that divided them, and white southerners found the transition to friendly relations went much more smoothly with white Yankees than with black southerners. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3.


27. As quoted in the *Weekly Floridian*, 26 November 1890.


33. Anna Rochester, *The Populist Movement in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1943), 59. This book must be considered with the proverbial “grain of salt.” There is no clear indication that Anna Rochester is/was a historian and International Publishers is a communist publisher, making it entirely possible that the book was meant as much as a political tract as a historical one.

34. *Ibid*, 60.


38. Clanton, *Populism: The Humane Preference*, 59. Although the lack of public debate seems to indicate that the alliances were in accord over “colored” inclusion, Clanton argues that “there was probably more disagreement” among the white delegations than is revealed in the press because “Alliance rules discouraged public disagreement or open attacks of one member on another.” According to the *Florida Times Union*, Colored Alliances came to the convention from 15 different states; see 8 December 1890.

39. *Ibid.*, 67. Clanton also points out that Sawyer’s speech is filtered through the notes of a reporter and not necessarily quoted directly.

40. *Florida Times Union*, 4 December 1890, 1:3.

41. *Florida Times Union*, 5 December 1890, 1:2.

42. *Florida Times Union*, 6 December 1890, 1:3.


49. Palmer, 65.


53. *Weekly Floridian*, 26 November 1890, 1:4. This sentiment is reiterated in the *Ocala Banner*, 5 December 1890.


55. *Ocala Banner*, 5 December 1890.

56. *Weekly Floridian*, 3 December 1890.

57. *Florida Times Union* 3 December 1890, 1:5. The only information I’ve been able to find about Fannie Vickery (without going to Kansas) is this: Fannie Randolph married H.N. Vickery in Lyon County, Kansas on 25 June 1885 (information at http://www.rootsweb.com/~ksflhs/ks/ תיקן_מראיגס.html). According to the “Kansas Historical Quarterly,” 9:2 (May 1940): 223-224, Fannie Vickery was re-elected historian of the Lyon County Chapter of the Kansas State Historical Society on 31 January 1940. There seems to be good reason to believe that this person is one and the same. Carelton Beals, *The Great Revolt and Its Leaders: A History of Popular Uprisings in the 1890s* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1968), 207 mentions Fannie Vickery but only that she was “tall,” “willowy,” and spoke at the convention. Other female speakers mentioned in Beals’ text were “Clara B. Colby, Vice-President of the Women’s National Press Association,” “Anna L. Diggs, the indefatigable Prohibitionist and reformer of Colorado and Kansas,” “Mary Ellen Lense, the great Kansas female orator; pretty Eva Valek of Minnesota,” and “Betty Gray, who owned a large Texas plantation.” I’ve found no mention of any of these women in the newspaper accounts of the time and Beals does not expand
much on their roles or backgrounds.
58. Ocala Banner 12 December 1890, 6:1. It should be noted that her speech occurred at the same time as Terrence Powderly’s and the same issue of the Ocala Banner reported that he “touched upon the question of equal pay for women who do the same work as men, advocating it at some length.”
59. Florida Times Union 6 December 1890.
60. Winsboro and Musoke, 1355.
62. Trouillot, 49.

Appendix A
The Ocala Demands*
1. A. We demand the abolition of all national banks.
B. We demand that the government shall establish sub-treasuries or depositories in several states, which shall loan money direct to the people at a low rate of interest, not to exceed two percent per annum, on non-perishable farm products, and also upon real estate, with proper limitations upon the quantity of land and amount of money.
C. We demand that the amount of circulating medium be speedily increased to not less than 850 per capita.
2. We demand that Congress shall pass such laws as will effectually prevent the dealing in futures of all agricultural and mechanical productions; providing a stringent system of procedure in trials that will secure the prompt conviction, and imposing such penalties as shall secure the most perfect compliance with the law.
3. We condemn the silver bill recently passed by Congress, and demand in lieu thereof the free and unlimited coinage of silver.
4. We demand the passage of laws prohibiting alien ownership of land, and that congress take prompt action to devise some plan to obtain all lands now owned by aliens and foreign syndicates; and that all lands now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of such as is actually used and needed by them be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

5. Believing in the doctrine of equal rights to all and special privileges to none, we demand:
A. That our national legislation shall be so framed in the future as not build up one industry at the expense of another.
B. We further demand a removal of all the existing heavy tariff tax from the necessities of life, that the poor of our land must have.
C. We further demand a just and equitable system of graduated tax on incomes.
D. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we demand that all national and state revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government economically and honestly administered.

*Florida Times Union, 9 December 1890, 1:1.

Appendix B
List of states represented and manner of representation.*

“The report of the committee on credentials show eighty-eight actual delegates present from the following states, each state having a full accredited delegation in attendance: Alabama 5, Arkansas 5, Colorado 1, Florida 3, Georgia 7, Illinois 2, Indiana 2, Indian Territory 2, Kansas 8, Kentucky 4, Louisiana 4, Maryland 2, Michigan 3, Mississippi 4, Missouri 6, North Carolina 5, South Dakota 2, Pennsylvania 2, South Carolina 4, North Dakota 2, Tennessee 4, Texas 4, Virginia 4, West Virginia, 2. Other states and territories having organizations and entitled to delegates are California, New Mexico and Oklahoma, but as yet no delegations have arrived from either. In addition to delegates, there are ten or twelve persons entitled to votes, which brings the actual numerical strength of the body up to one hundred. Besides these one hundred, the local committee on entertainment reports 456 more visiting alliances men from outside the state, including alternates and women, and all these can attend the deliberations of the council. Among the delegates are five women, Mrs. Vickery, vice-president of the Kansas alliance being in the number.”

*Florida Times Union, 3 December 1890.