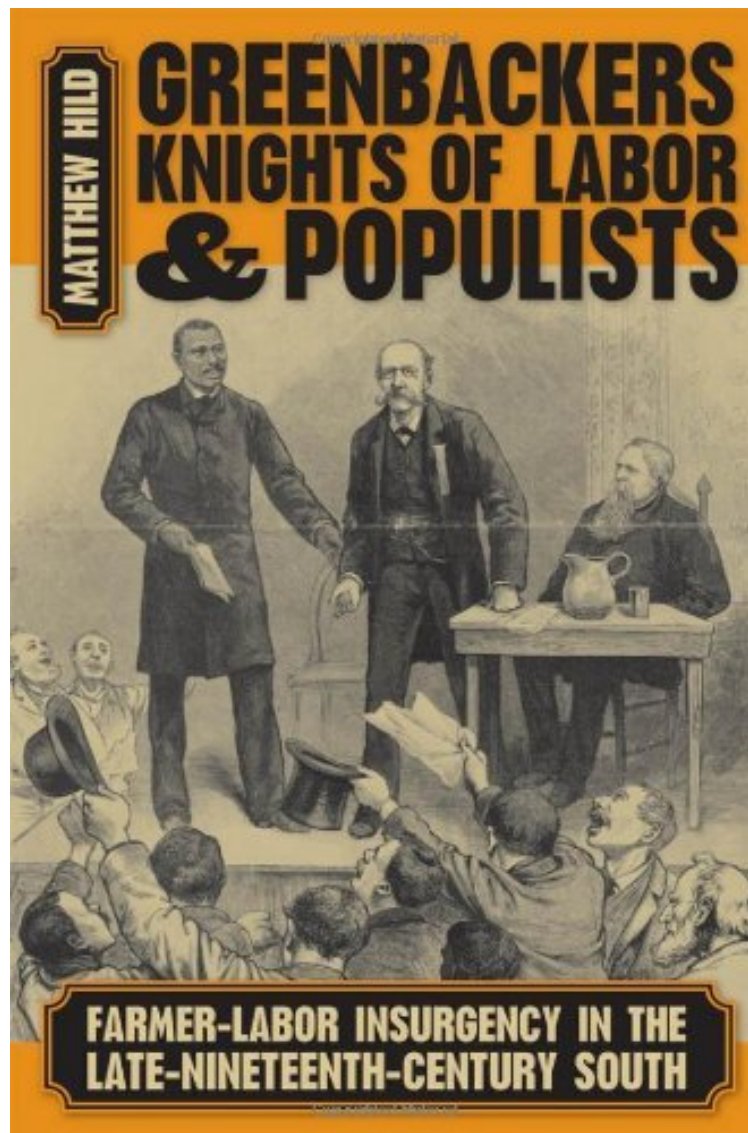


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Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-labor Insurgency in the Late-nineteenth-century South

Matthew Hild

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Matthew Hild : Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-labor Insurgency in the Late-nineteenth-century South before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-labor Insurgency in the Late-nineteenth-century South:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. When the Red States really were RedBy Ernest HaberkernThis one of a number of accounts, most of which are mentioned and commented on in this book, of the popular movement of

farmers, small businessmen and trade unionists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This movement was strongest in the Western and Southern states. Professor Hild's account concentrates on the southern states (including Texas) where this movement recruited African Americans and women in significant numbers. In some cases locals, not just the movement in general, were integrated along racial and sexual lines. The question is: why did it eventually collapse?

Historians have widely studied the late-nineteenth-century southern agrarian revolts led by such groups as the Farmers' Alliance and the People's (or Populist) Party. Much work has also been done on southern labor insurgencies of the same period, as kindled by the Knights of Labor and others. However, says Matthew Hild, historians have given only minimal consideration to the convergence of these movements. Hild shows that the Populist (or People's) Party, the most important third party of the 1890s, established itself most solidly in Texas, Alabama, and, under the guise of the earlier Union Labor Party, Arkansas, where farmer-labor political coalitions from the 1870s to mid-1880s had laid the groundwork for populism's expansion. Third-party movements fared progressively worse in Georgia and North Carolina, where little such coalition building had occurred, and in places like Tennessee and South Carolina, where almost no history of farmer-labor solidarity existed. Hild warns against drawing any direct correlations between a strong Populist presence in a given place and a background of farmer-laborer insurgency. Yet such a background could only help Populists and was a necessary precondition for the initially farmer-oriented Populist Party to attract significant labor support. Other studies have found a lack of labor support to be a major reason for the failure of Populism, but Hild demonstrates that the Populists failed despite significant labor support in many parts of the South. Even strong farmer-labor coalitions could not carry the Populists to power in a region in which racism and violent and fraudulent elections were, tragically, central features of politics.

This is the first book-length treatment of a strangely neglected topic: the southern farmer-labor insurgency of the second half of the nineteenth century. Hild disagrees with those historians who suggest that southern farmers and laborers possessed little in common; instead, he argues that the denizens of the farm and factory sometimes worked in considerable harmony. He also provides a convincing explanation for why, in certain parts of the South, such cooperation was possible and why it failed elsewhere in the region. All students of southern farmers and laborers will welcome this fresh look at an important subject. (Barton C. Shaw Cedar Crest College) With his attention sharply focused on farmer-labor political cooperation at local, state, and national levels? from Greenbackers through the Populists and Progressives? Hild's book is a prodigious feat of scholarship. He is a shrewd guide through a complex story, as well as a perceptive analyst of the impediments of class and race and of the fraud and violence that bedeviled the popular insurgencies. (Sheldon Hackney University of Pennsylvania) Excellent . . . There is much to praise in this book. . . . This is groundbreaking work that will cause historians to reevaluate the nature of southern Populism, labor organizing in the South, and the importance of historical contingency and location. It should also open up areas for further research. This book is essential reading for all scholars interested in third-party politics, labor history, Populism, and southern history. (Journal of American History) This valuable new addition to the study of the nineteenth-century South provides readers with a smoothly written, learned, and insightful account of the various movements throughout the region to win gains for farmers and laborers. . . . Hild excels at presenting the nuances of each set of local issues and activists while also remaining true to the larger questions of labor-farmer cooperation. . . . This volume is a must read for graduate students in the field and has much to offer advanced undergraduates . . . a valuable study of local southern politics between 1870 and 1900, one that deserves to be widely read and incorporated into scholars' accounts of the period. (Georgia Historical Quarterly) A well-researched book that deserves the widest possible readership. (Journal of Southern History) [A] perceptive and well-argued study . . . Hild has written the best region-wide study of Southern Populism to appear in the last twenty-five years. (Arkansas Historical Quarterly) Hild's research into the newspapers and manuscript sources of the insurgents lands him right in the mainstream of scholarship. . . . Readers wanting to know the specifics of how well, how far, and how long a nascent coalition of interests endured in the late-nineteenth-century South could do no better than to plant their eyes here. (Register of the Kentucky Historical Society) Provides some important perspectives that make the book very worthwhile to students of labor history or the South. . . . Hild's book is an interesting and easily digestible look at the South through the perspective of the farmer-labor movement rather than from the perspective of race. This fresh view gives new understanding of the late-nineteenth-century South and shows its history as much more than a black-white struggle interwoven with North-South sectional conflict. Beyond its insight on the farmer-labor insurgency, Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists challenges historians to look at the South in different dimensions. (West Virginia History) About the Author Matthew Hild teaches history at Georgia State University and the Georgia Institute of Technology.