The Role of the Populist Party in Homestead.
By Irwin Marcus, with Rob Moore and Jennie Bullard

In the early 1890s, the character of Homestead shifted as a workers' town began a transition which culminated in its emergence as a company town. This change became visible in the immediate aftermath of the Homestead Lockout of 1892, as the Carnegie Steel Company increased its control of the workplace. Work rules, skilled workers, and the union lacked the power to block this change. Company control extended into the town as the press and politicians avoided controversial issues. However, the march of company domination suffered a temporary setback in 1894 when community residents welcomed members of the "industrial armies" and established a strong Populist Club. These activities set the stage for the 1894 election in which some Populist candidates polled 25 percent of the vote cast in Homestead. This showing contrasted with the weak performance of the Pennsylvania Populist Party in most urban, industrial areas. Although this outburst proved ephemeral, the Socialist Party of America and the Steel Strike of 1919 renewed this protest sentiment in the early twentieth century.

Skilled iron workers in late-nineteenth-century Homestead exercised considerable autonomy in the workplace. Their strength resulted from the combined effects of an egalitarian moral code, work rules, and a powerful trade union. They set output quotas and used sympathy strikes to maintain solidarity and good conditions. These workers also played important roles in the town as they organized social affairs including picnics, parades, and singing societies. Some workers became involved in local politics. John McLuckie, a steel worker and a union member, served as burgess during the 1892 lockout. Responses to the lockout reflected the extent of community support for the workers. Public officials, the local newspaper editor, merchants, and the clergy aided the iron and steel workers. The Local News featured favorable editorials and articles by Terence Powderly, head of the Knights of Labor, and other leaders. Merchants sent money and

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tobacco to the strikers and loaned furniture for use in the local union's office. Clergymen denounced Andrew Carnegie and the Carnegie Company's use of Pinkertons.\(^1\)

Nevertheless, Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick, aided by the courts and the militia, won the conflict. In its aftermath, management hired a new labor force and fostered technological innovation. The Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers retained little strength and could not counter the establishment of company domination of the workplace. Town developments moved in a similar direction. Local politics changed with the resignation of Burgess John McLuckie in December 1892. His replacement was less identified with steel workers and more sympathetic to the mill owners. The Local News provided minimal coverage of local conflicts and stressed the absence of bitter fights over local issues. The presence of fewer skilled workers reduced the role of workers as customers of local businessmen and made merchants less reliable allies in future labor conflicts. The clergy also became less outspoken in behalf of workers' interests.\(^2\)

However, national developments provided dissatisfied workers and town residents with a new means of protest, the Populist Party. This "third party" achieved its greatest strength in parts of the south and west where discontented farmers sought to increase their income and political power by democratizing American society. Their Omaha Platform of 1892 included planks advocating land reform and effective control of the railroads as well as demands with more appeal to industrial workers. These provisions included calls for an eight-hour day, a graduated income tax, and abolition of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Some workers voted for the Populist Party in 1892 — Rocky Mountain miners, Illinois coal miners, and Texas railway workers. Populism's appeal to industrial workers increased in the aftermath of the depression of 1893 although such workers continued to be a marginal element of the party's constituency. Many found the government unresponsive to their problems of decreased income and increased unemployment.

Their disappointment with the Republican and Democratic parties set the stage for Homestead residents to participate in more radical

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\(^1\) Pittsburgh Commercial-Gazette, July 2, 1892; Homestead Local News, July 2, 9, 23, Aug. 23, 1892; New York Times, July 12, 1892; National Labor Tribune, Aug. 27, 1892.

\(^2\) Local News, July 2, 23, Oct. 22, 1892; Jan. 25, 26, Mar. 8, 1893; Feb. 21, 1894; Feb. 19, 1895.
forms of protest in 1894. "Industrial armies," most notably a contingent under the direction of Jacob Coxey, organized to protest against the conditions produced by the depression of 1893 and to call for change. Coxey's plan called for the enactment of two bills which would generate large issues of paper money. The currency would be used to pay for the construction of good roads and public improvements, thereby creating jobs for the unemployed. To arouse public support, he and his followers marched to Washington in 1894 as a "living petition" of the unemployed. Other industrial armies formed, some of them larger than Coxey's, and marched to Washington to join Coxey. The demands of the industrial armies won widespread support from Populists and organized labor along the route of the march.3

Homestead supporters undertook preparations for the arrival of Coxey's Army prior to its departure from Massillon, Ohio. Elmer E. Bales, a former employee of the Carnegie Company and probably a former member of the advisory committee of the Homestead lodges of the Amalgamated at the time of the lockout, spearheaded the efforts in Homestead. He recruited unemployed steel workers to join the Commonwealth [the term for the Coxeyite organization—Editor] and held a meeting of the Coxeyites and Populists in Homestead to stir support for the "industrial army." The audience heard speeches by Bales, Eugene Sullivan, and William Foy, and a report that several businessmen had contributed bread and meat to supply the expedition. Sullivan later ran as a candidate for the state legislature on the Populist Party ticket. (Foy had been shot by a Pinkerton detective in the Homestead Lockout confrontation.) As Coxey's Army approached Homestead, an escort, led by Elmer Bales and the Homestead Steel Workers' Band, met them. The people of Homestead turned out in force to give the marchers a hearty welcome and led them through the streets to their camp in Fred Schuchman's ice house which became overcrowded with an influx of new recruits. Here the army attained its greatest strength; press estimates were in the five to six hundred range. Many recent immigrants joined the industrial army as recruiters did a thriving business among Poles, Hungarians, and Slavs who spoke little English. A meeting at the Opera House provided a forum for the Coxeyite message. The town contributed three wagonloads of provisions plus blankets, shoes, and other supplies. In an ironic twist,

the Coxeyites appointed Alexander Childs, a nephew of Henry Clay Frick, as its community officer.4

Other industrial armies also visited Homestead. General Sullivan brought his 2nd Chicago Division to the town and received a greeting from Elmer Bales and other members of the Populist Club who led them to the park where they spent their stay in Homestead. Meetings with speech-making highlighted their visit. In addition to talks by Sullivan and Bales, the crowd of four hundred heard John McLuckie speak in behalf of better laws for workers. Galvin’s army marched into Homestead and stayed at the ice house. Its members received a warm welcome and plenty of food. Galvin consulted with the labor leaders and Populists who had met Coxey. As industrial armies became more commonplace in Homestead, they received less attention. However, the armies of Randall and Thomas marched through Homestead on their way to Washington. Some public officials and citizens in the Pittsburgh area viewed Coxeyism with alarm as they saw it threatening property and existing institutions. Police in Pittsburgh and Allegheny feared that the presence of the Coxeyites would precipitate violence by the unemployed. In Homestead, however, the local newspaper editorialized that the town had given respectful and generous treatment to the industrial armies and the Commonwealth had acted in an orderly and peaceable manner.5

The Populists not only served as defenders of the rights of Coxey’s Army to petition Congress for relief and employment, but continued their agitation for major social change. Most historians view the north and east, including Pennsylvania, as virtually untouched by Populism. The few articles on Pennsylvania Populism describe it as an agrarian phenomenon with its greatest strength in fringe areas such as Crawford, Potter, Tioga, and Indiana Counties. The Populist Party did register some successes with coal miners according to these accounts, but these articles point to a lack of success in Philadelphia and Allegheny Counties. Aggregate figures lend credence to this interpretation, but investigations of specific towns provide exceptions such as Homestead.6

5 Local News, June 19, 20, 25, 26, 1894; McMurry, Coxey’s Army, 141.
Populist Party activity increased in the summer of 1894 with a giant meeting chaired by Eugene Sullivan, president of the Populist Club, followed by a miners' meeting at which Sullivan's speech highlighted the festivities. In June 1894, the Populists held an enthusiastic convention at Lafayette Hall in Pittsburgh to nominate candidates for the forthcoming election. Sullivan gave the principal address to the more than four hundred delegates, and he became a nominee for the state legislature. Sullivan joined B. W. Carpenter, running for district attorney, James Campbell, a candidate for the state legislature, and D. W. Hutchinson, nominee for a seat in the United States House of Representatives, as the candidates from Homestead. This impressive slate reflected the standing of Homestead as a Populist stronghold. Its Populist Club, which consisted of two hundred members, published Populist Advocate as its official newspaper. This newspaper, one of many Populist organs published in the state, remained in operation for five years. Later in the month, Homestead Populists sent a large delegation and several speakers to a big open-air meeting of McKeesport Populists. The pace of electioneering accelerated in October, and candidates toured the area to address coal miners and other constituents. In late October, the members of the Homestead Populist Club began applying pressure on politicians who failed to support Coxey's demands for the issuance of more currency and the construction of good roads.7

In the first week of November, as the date of the election neared, the Populists held a very well-attended meeting, preceded by a parade, at which speakers condemned protectionism and pointed to the differential application of laws applied to workers and monopolists. On the eve of the election, the editors of the local newspaper described the Populists as the most active of the three parties. Their editorial noted that Populist meetings drew the largest attendance and aroused the most enthusiasm. In a different vein, they described the Populist Party in Homestead, taking population into account, as the strongest in Western Pennsylvania, if not the entire commonwealth. Election returns verified this assessment as the Republicans won, but the Populists outpolled the Democrats. To appreciate their showing in Homestead and Munhall, the site of the Carnegie plants, national and state figures should be considered. In 1892, James Weaver gained

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7 People, June 16, 1894; Local News, May 7, June 11, 14, 19, 20, 25, 26, Oct. 4, 26, 27, 1894.
8.5 percent of the vote in his race for the presidency, and in 1894, Jerome T. Ailman, the Populist candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, won less than 3 percent of the vote. In Homestead, Ailman won 15 percent of the vote and other Populist candidates achieved even more impressive results with the congressional and assembly candidates polling 28 percent of the vote. The candidate for Congress won more than 25 percent of the vote in Munhall. An editorial in the local press added another distinction for the Populists when it mentioned that charges of vote selling had been circulated but the Populists remained unimplicated.8

In the aftermath of the election, the Populist Club continued to hold meetings, host speakers, and take political stands. It brought increased attention to local issues. Prior to the election, the club had criticized borough council for giving the railroad the right to raise the grade. In 1895, it condemned the "Greater Pittsburgh Plan," a proposal championed by the Chamber of Commerce to centralize decision-making over a wide area and range of activities. The sponsors of the plan expected to boost civic pride and stimulate business growth while suppressing local autonomy and democratic self-determination. The platform of the Populist Club condemned the Homestead borough council for failing to provide a high level of public service. The indictment specified the inefficient way it conducted business and the preferential treatment accorded the Carnegie Company and the corporations which received valuable franchises. The club also demanded democratization of local government. Its planks called for the election of the Chief Engineer of the Water Works, conducting a referendum before granting a franchise, and the right of taxpayers to submit petitions on borough affairs. More specifically, the Populist Club called for a referendum on public ownership at the next borough election. The party nominated candidates for local office in the 1895 election but the results failed to meet its expectations. One of the candidates for borough council did poll 30 percent of the vote and finished second. The Populist Club stressed educational features and invited speakers to its meetings. Eugene Debs received an invitation but could not accept it because of a speaking tour in the northwest. By the following year, the club had disappeared but a Citizens Borough Party had been organized. Its members criticized borough council and saw a need to check extravagance and to offer a political alternative. Most of its nominees had little success in the 1896 elec-

8 Local News, Nov. 3, 6, 7, 1894.
tions as the Republicans won a big victory. The Carnegie Company added control of the town to its dominance on the shop floor, a control that would persist until the successes of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and Democratic Party in the 1930s.

In 1892 and 1919 (the steel strike), the workplace was the primary terrain for the battles of dissatisfied workers. However, political action offered an avenue for protest in the intervening period. Some Homestead voters supported parties advocating political and economic democratization. The Populist Party of Homestead supplied a voice of protest for industrial workers at a time when the political and economic systems neglected their needs and wishes. This episode had a short life, but it illustrated the continuing dissatisfaction of residents and workers with the Carnegie Company and "politics as usual."
Frankfort Academy — 1841.
By K. T. H. McFarland

In the Pennsylvania Division of the Oakland Carnegie Library, on a lower shelf in the education section, sits a nondescript volume stamped only “Catalogues — r378.7 C6952” on the spine. This proves to be a somewhat haphazard accumulation of academic catalogues from an assortment of academies, colleges, and seminaries, dating from the 1840s. Bound in with these printed catalogues is a section of a half-dozen hand-written pages including the roster of faculty and students for the 1841 term at the Frankfort Academy. That list is duplicated below, with annotations for purposes of identification.

Frankfort Academy, located at Frankfort Springs, Hanover Township, Beaver County, opened its doors in 1841 and closed in 1848. Its curriculum was said to equip students to enter the junior class at Jefferson College in Canonsburg. It was founded by Rev. James Sloan (1807-71). Sloan had graduated from Jefferson College in 1830, and subsequently studied theology with Dr. John Anderson. He taught for several years at the academy in Florence, was licensed by the Presbytery of Washington in 1835, and accepted the call to the Frankfort Presbyterian Church in 1836, remaining there until 1844. He then served the congregation at Pigeon Creek from 1845 to 1862. He served as a trustee of Jefferson College (and its successor, Washington and Jefferson) from September 1845 until his death.

Rev. Sloan taught the classical subjects at the academy, while all the others were taught by Thomas Nicholson (1804-72). Nicholson was a native of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and was a largely self-educated man. He was the first Beaver County Superintendent of Schools, and he served in the legislature from 1844 to 1846 and from 1868 to 1869. He was known as the “father of the Pennsylvania common schools.”

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1 Joseph H. Bausman, History of Beaver County, Pennsylvania (New York, 1904), 831.
3 Bausman, 831; History of Beaver County, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1888), 877-78.
FRANKFORT ACADEMY
SESSION
1841
Rev. James Slone [sic]
Prof. Clas. Lit.
Prof. Nat. & Eng. Lit.

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<td>J. Lyons</td>
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<td>L. P. Miller</td>
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<td>A. Moorehead</td>
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4 James Cross, son of Silas Cross, was a teacher and farmer who lived near Florence. Emma B. Pollock, *Frankfort Springs Presbyterian Church Cemetery* (n. p., 1964), not paged.

5 James Martin Hunter Gordon, M.D. (1825-83), son of James and Mary Ann (Officer) Gordon, studied medicine under Dr. S. M. King and practiced for over thirty years in Fayette City, Pa. He had received his collegiate training at both Jefferson and Washington Colleges. He was a younger brother of Rev. Sloan’s second wife, Margaret. John S. VanVoorhis, *The Old and New Monongahela* (Pittsburgh, 1893), 246-49; *Catalogue of the Members of the Union Literary Society of Washington College, Washington, Pa.* (Washington, Pa., 1847), 24.


8 Thomas C. Nicholson (died 1910), son of Thomas and Rebecca (Stewart) Nicholson. He was a lawyer and the editor of the Beaver *Argus*. During the Civil War, he served as First Lieutenant of Company I of the 140th
D. Nicholson
M. Parkinson
R. P. Roberts
A. G. Shaffer
G. W. Shaffer [sic]
J. H. Shaffer
W. Slagle
J. H. Wallace
G. S. Walker
W. Witherow

Beaver Co., Pa.
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9 David S. Nicholson, son of Thomas and Rebecca (Stewart) Nicholson. He died in Fairview, West Virginia. Pollock.

10 Michael A. Parkinson, son of Thomas and Mary Parkinson, graduated from Jefferson College and the Western Theological Seminary. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Ohio (later the Presbytery of Steubenville) and spent most of his ministerial career in Jefferson Co., Ohio. History of Beaver County (1888), 704; Franklin Literary Society, 26; J. A. Caldwell, History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio (Wheeling, 1880), 553.

11 Richard Pettit Roberts (1820-63), son of John and Ruth (Dungan) Roberts. He studied law under N. P. Fetterman and was admitted to the bar in 1848. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he was elected Colonel of the 140th Pennsylvania Infantry. He was killed at the Battle of Gettysburg while serving as an acting brigade commander. Pollock; Stewart, 360-65.

12 George Washington Shaffer (born 1818), son of John and Ann C. (Geary) Shaffer. He studied at Jefferson College and the Western Theological Seminary, being licensed by the Presbytery of Washington in 1847. He served a number of Presbyterian congregations. Catalogue of Washington and Jefferson, 124; Triennial Catalogue of the Western Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, Allegheny, Pa., 1847-1848 (Pittsburgh, 1848), xiii.


15 George Stoddard Walker, M.D. (born 1820), son of John and Nancy (Stoddard) Walker. He graduated from Jefferson College in 1844 and taught school in Georgia and South Carolina until 1846. He then attended Jefferson Medical College and practiced medicine in Pittsburgh, California, and, after 1851, St. Louis, Mo. Catalogue of Washington and Jefferson, 125.
The Homewood Board of Trade Fair, 1902-1903.
By Pam Oestreicher

In the collections of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania are a group of photographs illustrating the Homewood Board of Trade fairs for 1902 and 1903, accompanied by the lavishly illustrated programs for each fair. They provide a glimpse of the promotional efforts of businessmen in the Homewood-Brushton area as they encouraged the development of their new suburb. As the Homewood Board of Trade constitution (1900) put it,

The purpose of the organization is the developing and protecting the commercial interests of this community, and by concerted action to aid in every way the general advancement of this vicinity.¹

By 1902, the membership of the group stood at 185, with growth to four hundred expected by the following year. As part of their goal to attract both residents and businesses to the area, the organization set as one of its major projects the establishment of a branch Carnegie Library in the neighborhood.

The activity which took most of the group's energy and resources, however, was the annual street fair, begun in 1902. It was specifically intended to draw crowds to the avenues of the neighborhood.

The purpose of holding a Mardi-Gras Carnival and Fair, is to show the general public the many advantages of the 21st, 22nd and 37th Wards, in a business way, and as a desirable residence section, as evidenced by the phenomenal [sic] growth in the past three years. Also to create a fund to be devoted to the erection of a Board of Trade building, as a permanent home for the organization.²

The first year's program was not primarily an account of the fair, but a dramatically illustrated catalog of the development of the area, including street and housing construction, business establishments, schools, and churches. It detailed the recent explosion of construction: 263 buildings constructed in the 21st Ward in 1899, 325 in 1900, and 689 in 1901, with many more expected.³ The 1902 fair, titled Mardi Gras Carnival and Fair, was held September 1 to 6 on the property of E. M. Bigelow, Hamilton Avenue. The Pittsburg Railway Company provided car service to the fair, advertising, and electricity.

¹ Homewood Board of Trade, Mardi Gras Carnival & Fair, Official Souvenir Program, 1902 (not paged).
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
Country Store, Homewood Board of Trade, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1902. (Photo by M. H. Jacobs, 809 Smithfield Street)
Prospective members of the Homewood Board of Trade, about to board a Consolidated Traction Company car for a jaunt to McKeesport during the 1902 fair.
Gaskill-Mundy-Levitt's Trained Wild Animals entrance, fair officials and attraction staff. The handwritten caption specifies the 1903 fair location: south side of Hamilton Avenue, east of Dunfermline.
Events in 1902 included pageants, free children’s days, fraternal organization nights, a wedding on the midway (music by the Homestead Library Band), the coronation of a king and queen, and drawings for prizes.

In 1903, the fair was held for a full week in July, 4 to 11, again on Hamilton Avenue. The fair committee, now named the Homewood Carnival Association, boasted that $300,000 had been spent to provide the best in facilities and entertainment. They guaranteed that every show was “strictly up-to-date, new, novel, artistic, moral, and absolutely the best. . . .” 4 Free events included a prismatic Electric Fountain, high diver Great Holden, and other dare devils. The Gaskell-Mundy-Levitt Carnival Company brought in and managed sixteen attractions. Their operation included such typical circus acts as acrobats, high wire performers, magicians, and a wild animal show. Various electrical displays, scenes from foreign lands, early movies, a Ferris wheel, and a wild west show were among the special activities receiving prominent billing. The schedule again included a wedding on the midway, a children’s day, and fraternal events, but this year labor unions received special notice with their own day and evening.

During the week of the fair, the Pittsburgh Gazette ran daily stories advertising the events and reporting on developments. The fair drew large crowds all week, despite stifling heat, thunderstorms, and floods in some areas. “[The] big open lot on Hamilton Avenue was crowded from early afternoon until the conclusion of the free performances at 11 o’clock. . . .” 5 July 7, the Gazette reported that all awaited the sensational dance among the lions of La Belle Salina. The crowd was treated to more excitement than it expected when the leopard attacked three people. A Miss Mazie Hall was saved by “William Grim (colored),” a man who earlier had saved lives in an electrical accident. 6

By week’s end, the paper reported that the fair was an unqualified success.

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4 Homewood Board of Trade, Carnival and Street Fair, Official Souvenir Program, 1903 (not paged).
5 Pittsburgh Gazette, July 5, 1903.
6 Ibid., July 7, July 9, 1903.