

Leonidas Folk's *The Progressive Farmer*: Remodeling
Reconstruction

Samantha Sanders
11384

November 28, 2006

History 452 Section 002
Senior Research Seminar
Dr. Uldricks

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Bachelor of Arts Degree, Major in History, 28 November 2006.

Abstract:

In researching *The Progressive Farmer*, this paper shows how Leonidas Polk helped the farmers of North Carolina after Reconstruction. This paper demonstrates how he aided farmers not only in agriculture, but also through education, politics, and housework. The paper shows the different techniques he relayed through his magazine, how farmers even aided him with suggestions of their own, and the reasons behind his establishment of the magazine.

Reconstruction was a difficult time for the farmers of the South. The Civil War left farmers poor and in most cases without the farms they once had. Across the South, many people strove to help the farmers pick up the pieces and to build a new life. In North Carolina Leonidas Polk took up the reigns to help the farmers recover from the war. Polk was the first commissioner of agriculture in North Carolina. Beginning in 1886 he published his magazine, *The Progressive Farmer*, to inform farmers of ways to improve their lives and product. Through his magazine, Polk made farmers aware of new agricultural techniques, methods to improve farming education, ways to improve housework, and advancements with the Farmers' Alliance. With the variety of articles published, farmers became more aware of problems as well as ways to make a better life for themselves. There were many difficulties after Reconstruction and Polk knew them as well as any other farmer. These issues, among others, made him realize the need for a public forum to help farmers in their struggles.

Across the South farmers were in desperate need of individuals who would help them with the issues they faced after the Civil War. Each state had their leader and Polk was this person for North Carolina. He achieved many things for North Carolina during his adult life including: establishing the Grange, establishing the Alliance, and creating a paper, *The Progressive Farmer*, for farmers to read. By looking at *The Progressive Farmer*, this paper will show how Polk strove to improve the situation of the poor white farmers. Creating this public forum allowed farmers to communicate with one another and become aware of the need for change. Polk established this paper because a political and economic change was needed throughout the South.

In researching Leonidas L. Polk, I have discovered a number of sources that have discussed his position in the Farmers' Alliance. Each author has taken a view on Folk's involvement. These views can be divided into three sections: Folk's role on a national level, his role in North Carolina, and Folk's views on the Colored Alliance. Each of these different views show how Polk wanted to change the situations of the poor white farmers in North Carolina.

Some historians have addressed Folk's role in reconstructing agricultural reform in larger works. For example, Donna Barnes discussed Folk's views on the subtreasury and free silver issues in her book *Farmers in Rebellion*. Polk felt that both issues were significant for the Alliance's success. Polk said that if the subtreasury system succeeded, then the Alliance would gain an abundant number of speakers for their cause.¹ With these lecturers, the Alliance would be able to inform farmers about this system and farmers would begin to be able to make more of a profit. The silver issue was similar in that the farmers would be able to obtain money to pay off debts. Polk was very adamant about both of these issues and strove for them during his term as president of the Alliance.

Another author that discussed Folk's role in the Alliance was C. Vann Woodward in his book, *Origins of the New South*. Woodward stated that Polk warned the Democrats "That the Alliance would not be content with free silver and minor demands of the Order, but would insist upon wholehearted support of the subtreasury.. ." ² Farmers wanted a place that they could take their crops and be paid. Having the subtreasury would allow farmers to continue producing crops.

¹ Donna A. Barnes, *Farmers in Rebellion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 124.

² C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 242.

Besides including Polk in the larger picture of the Alliance, a few scholars have focused on the founding of the North Carolina Alliance and Folk's role in the organization. Lala Carr Steelman devoted an entire book to the subject of the Alliance in North Carolina and the rise of the Populist Party in *The North Carolina Farmer's Alliance: A Political History, 1887-1893*. Steelman stated that the farmers needed organization and a newspaper to help their cause, and Polk was the one who initiated both of these areas.³ Polk knew that farmers needed information to push ahead and he was going to supply their demands with *The Progressive Farmer*.

Robert McMath also views Polk in this manner in his book the *Populist Vanguard*. McMath describes Polk as being influential in the shaping of the Farmers' Alliance. McMath stated, "Polk thought of himself as a centrist, one whose task included keeping the farmers' movement from becoming too radical.. ." ⁴ Polk wanted change to come to the farmers, but he did not want it to get out of hand.

Polk did want change, but not for all of the farmers. Some scholars discuss how Polk was against the Colored Alliance. One such scholar is Gerald H. Gaither who wrote *Blacks and the Populist Revolt: Ballots and Bigotry in the "New South."* In the book, Gaither stated that Polk did not want a third party to be formed; he just wanted to focus on the education of farmers.⁵ Polk clearly did not want the blacks in the Farmers' Alliance; he believed they had no place.

Folk's want of exclusion of blacks is heard from Michael Schwartz as well in his book *Radical Protest and Social Structure: The Southern Farmers' Alliance and Cotton*

³ Lala Carr Steelman, *The North Carolina Farmers' Alliance: A Political History, 1887-1893* (Greenville: East Carolina University Publications Department of History, 1985), 9

⁴ Robert C. McMath, *Populist Vanguard* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 130.

⁵ Gerald H. Gaither, *Blacks and the Populist Revolt: Ballots and Bigotry in the "New South"* (Alabama: The University of Alabama: 1977), 23.

Tenancy, 1880-1890. Schwartz stated that Polk denounced the blacks and their desire to organize. Polk stated that the Colored Alliance was "a separate and distinct group with which we have nothing to do."⁶ Polk did not want the Alliance to have anything to do with the Colored Alliance; their issues were not a part of the Farmers' Alliance.

These various authors all shared a different view of Polk and his involvement in the Southern Farmers' Alliance. Along with these scholars, I will give my own opinion on Folk's participation throughout this time. After researching, I found a rich amount of primary material concerning Folk's life. I also read through his magazine, which my thesis is developed from. A large amount of material from *The Progressive Farmer* is in the paper because these are Folk's actual words, and his views on advancing agricultural technology. With this magazine along with the other primary documents I came across, I hope to add my own theory of Folk's participation in the Alliance.

In the life of Southerners, Reconstruction completely changed the life they once led. This change also brought a race from the depths of oppression to equal status under the law. Farmers were faced with the many consequences of the war and Reconstruction, the rise of the New South oriented Democratic Party that had little intentions on helping them, and a trend of debt that seemed to have no end. The many adjusts that white farmers had to deal with left them disgusted and they in turn appealed to the elites c f the country and retaliated against those that had changed their world forever.

The affects of Reconstruction was immense. Southerners considered the Republicans of the North to be the villains; they were the ones that wanted to preseive the

⁶ Michael Schwartz, *Radical Protest and Social Structure: The Southern Farmers' Alliance and Cotton Tenancy, 1880-1890* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 98.

Union, end slavery, and defend the freedmen.⁷ Indeed a number of consequences hit Southerners, and it could be said that Radicals wanted to greatly alter their lives. After the war, the Republicans of Congress began to deliberate about the changes that needed to take place and imposed three amendments to the Constitution. They established the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments to coincide with the events of this war. The Thirteenth dealt with citizenship and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth addressed issues with voting. The Fourteenth was actually the first amendment to bring the word male into the Constitution, so farm women were also affected by this and other amendments.⁸ In all cases, the new amendments created a revolution with people throughout the South. In addition, Southerners also faced issues that hit closer to home. These consisted of waning farm prices, unemployment, and a depression in sight.⁹ Every farmer was affected by these devastating blows. In Edward Ayers' book, *The Promise of a New South*, he quotes William P. Trent stating that both the occupations of the Southern gentleman and plantation mistress had disappeared.¹⁰ Clearly farmers were in store for a complete reconstruction of their lives.

The consequences of the war and Reconstruction were not the only issues to affect farmers. Politics of the time also put a damper on the growth that could have occurred with farmers after this time. According to Ayer, "Politics mattered enormously

⁷ Larry Kincaid, "Victims of Circumstance: An Interpretation of Changing Attitudes Toward Republican Policy Makers and Reconstruction," *The Journal of American History* 57 (1970): 48-66. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

⁸ John Pyne and Gloria Sesso, "A Humanities Approach for Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom," *The History Teacher* 31 (1998): 467-494. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

⁹ J. Pyne, 471.

¹⁰ Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of a New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 24-25

to most Southern men."¹¹ When a person cast their ballot, they were not only voting for a party, but aligning themselves with individuals who would be their friends.¹² When people began to vote after Reconstruction, they were faced with the same choices they had had in previous years.¹³ Although other political parties, mainly independents, sprang up and gave people another outlet, the Democrats still gained a firm control throughout the South.¹⁴ The Democrats that took hold of office were also from the more prominent landowning families throughout the area. Ayers states,

Democrats scoffed not only at Republican support for railroads and other business, but also at Republican initiatives in schools, orphanages, prisons, and asylums. Democrats assured landowning farmers that the party would roll back taxes... Democratic policies encouraged economic growth not through active aid... but through low taxes on railroads and on farmland...¹⁵

From this statement, it is clear that the Democrats favored the landowning class and intended on providing for their needs in the government. This situation did not help the other farmers throughout the South. It would become a growing concern as time progressed.

Politics were not the only obstacle farmers had to face, they also faced economic problems as well. After Reconstruction, prices took a sharp decline.¹⁶ Many of the farmers, along with other people with debt, believed that the lack of currency was the culprit.¹⁷ In Edward L. Ayers book *The Promise of a New South: Life after Reconstruction*, he tells a story of the events that occurred when farmers brought in their cotton to be priced:

¹ Ayers, 34

² Ayers, 34

³ Ayers, 34

⁴ Ayers, 34

⁵ Ayers, 8-9

⁶ Ayers, 45.

⁷ Ayers, 45.

"Pa's favorite merchant came out and, with a sharp pocket knife, cut large holes in the jute bagging of the bales and extracted samples of the fleecy staple," Mitchell Garrett, son of a farmer, remembered from his Alabama town. GaiTett's father was almost always dissatisfied with the offer; the merchant was quick to agree and shrug "the plight of the Southern farmer on to the shoulders of the big cotton buyers up North. My vivid imagination at once pictured a long line-up of top-hatted, frock-coated, pig-faced gentlemen up New England way walking off with great buckets full of money squeezed from the poor cotton farmers of the South." "

18

Farmers were not receiving high payments for cotton and struggled to make ends meet.

Along this same line, farmers went into considerable debt when creating a product.

Farmers were in need of staples such as sugar and salt as well as farm equipment.

10

Merchants would set up stores for farmers to purchase these items. If farmers could not pay in cash, a crop lien would be set up.²⁰ The farmer would be able to purchase products from the store and pay for it with a percentage of his crop.²¹ However, merchants would raise the price of products in their stores, so it was nearly impossible to pay back the debt that had been created. Farmers continued to stay in debt for numerous years.

The debt that the farmers found themselves in made them turn to other sources for help. New political parties as well as organization stemmed from the rise in need of the farmers. The first of these organizations was a grass roots movement called the Grange.²² Farmers from all across the nation joined the Grange because they believed it would help them overcome their problems of debt.³ Farmers would come together across the states

¹⁸ Ayers, 57.

¹⁹ Ayers, 13.

²⁰ Ayers, 13.

²¹ Ayers, 13.

²² Ayers, 214.

²³ Ayers, 214.

in local Granges, and they would hold meetings to discuss reforms that needed to take place.²⁴ Ayers states:

The Grange, envisioning unified agrarians arrayed against merchants and railroads, sought out large planters to lead its fight. At the annual meetings of the Grange much of the talk turned around ways to control laborers and tenants more effectively, ... and ways to prevent merchants from cutting in on the trade with tenants.²⁵

The farmers apart of these groups and involved with such topics were usually large landowners. The small fanners did not trust such individuals.²⁶

Other groups evolved out of this movement such as the Agricultural Wheel and the Farmer's Union.²⁷ These groups were exclusively statewide and were made up of large planters.²⁸ However, the Farmers' Alliance began to form in the 1880's and took off exponentially. The Alliance used the same sources that previous organization used, but strived to be a national group.²⁹ The Alliance began to "... spread its message through lecturers who traveled from one place to another and through newspapers sympathetic to the cause."³⁰ Farmers that came to know about the Alliance were attracted to it because of its secrecy aura.³¹ The organization of the Alliance was very structured and it had a prestige appearance.³² Farmers were quick to join.

The Alliance grew into an even bigger development, the Populist Party. The Farmers' Alliance had raised their demands, but "neither branch of the federal

²⁴ Benjamin Horace Hibbard, "Legislative Pressure Groups Among Farmers," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 179 ((1935): 17-24. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

²⁵ Ayers, 214.

²⁶ Ayers, 214.

²⁷ Ayers, 215.

²⁸ Ayers, 215.

²⁹ Ayers, 215.

³⁰ Ayers, 215.

³¹ Peter H. Argersinger, "Organizing the Farmers' Movement," *Reviews in American History* 4 (1976): 565-570. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

³² Argersinger, 566.

government appeared interested in the plight of the farmers.. ,"³³ The Democrats did not seem interested either; they continued to leave the subtreasury bill will a committee.³⁴

Ayers states that, "Pressures built for the creation of a new national party dedicated to

real change." So, the Populist or People's Party was formed because the farmers' needs were not being met. Members of the party claimed that Democrats would never change and would always take the farmers' vote without giving them anything in return.³⁶ The Populists wanted a great change in the government. "No single idea or policy drove the Populist movement, only a general insistence that the government pursue actions more equitable for the majority of citizens.. ."³⁷ This is what the farmers wanted. The Populist Party provided a group that voiced the farmers' needs.

Among the leaders throughout these movements was a man named Leonidas Polk. After the war and the decline of agriculture, Polk decided to rise up and support the local and national farmers. He was from a farming background and knew the situation that farmers were in. Polk began to help on a small scale on his own property, and then went regional and national along with other Alliance leaders. His struggle was the same as other farmers across the area: to regain the life they once lived.

Polk was raised on a farm in Anson County. At an early age he decided that he would continue running his parents' farm. Stuart Noblin stated that "The blood of farmers ran in his veins, and his mind and body were attuned to rural life."³⁸ He attended Davidson College for a year and a half. He left because he thought he had

³³ Ayers, 250.

³⁴ Ayers, 250.

³⁵ Ayers, 250.

³⁶ Ayers, 250.

³⁷ Ayers, 266.

³⁸ Stuart Noblin, *Leonidas LaFayette Polk: Agrarian Crusader* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 31.

obtained enough education to make an excellent farmer. Polk returned to Anson County to farm in the summer of 1856 and began to farm the land that his parents had left him.

When Polk returned he also became interested in politics and eventually became a Union Whig. He also fought in the Civil War for the Confederates. When he returned home from the war, he found that his farm had been destroyed. Over the next eight years, he worked to restore what had been lost. In 1873, came the news of a railroad being built through Anson County. When Polk heard of the railroad, and discovered that it would be running through his property, he came up with an astonishing idea: "...he would turn his farm into a town called Polkton."³⁹ Polk wanted this new town to serve the farmers of the area, so he took the only house on the property and converted the rooms to serve the needs of the people. One room was used as a post office, another a small store, and later he added a printing press on the second level.⁴⁰ To advertise the new area, Polk began a weekly newspaper. Noblin stated that Polk "told of the good farming country, where corn, cotton, rye, oats, wheat, and hay flourished; of the soil that was adapted to the successful cultivation of potatoes, melons, apples, pears, peaches, and grapes; of the fine water and healthful climate; and of the abundance of all kinds of lumber and stone for building purposes."⁴

In a year's time, many families and individuals moved to Polk's town. Farmers wanted to work for Polk because they knew that they could make more money in Polkton than in the farming jobs they had previously occupied. They knew that the stores in Polkton sold supplies at a cheaper rate than other merchants, so they would be able to work off debts. One example of this was a letter written by J. H. Woodcock that Polk

Ibid., 77.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 77.

Ibid., 77.

received in the fall of 1875. Woodcock was a tenant farmer who was interested in moving to Polkton. In the letter he stated the time that he would be arriving at Polkton and the wages that he was willing to work for.⁴² As Polk continued to build up the town of Polkton, he added more stores including more general stores, a school and church.⁴³ Polk continued to add more to his community to supply farmers with all of their needs. With the establishment of his farming community, Polk continued to work hard to help farmers. He wanted all farmers to come together and create a wave of change for the rest of the nation.

Folk's farming community was just a start to the change that he would create. Once he had completed this task, he went on to spread the Grange across North Carolina. In Grange chapters in various North Carolina counties farmers met to discuss farming techniques and to create a sociable atmosphere. These meetings created a community for individuals who shared the same lifestyle and the same concerns and problems. The meetings were successful, but Polk began to think of larger issues. Polk and other leaders wanted the establishment of the Department of Agriculture to continue aiding farmers across the state.⁴⁴ This struggle would prove to be a long journey. A bill was created to establish the department which included a seven-man board as the governing body. "The board consisted of the governor as *ex-officio* chairman, the state geologist, the president of the University of North Carolina, the master of the State Grange, the president of the State Agricultural Society, and two agriculturalists appointed by the others"⁴⁵ The

⁴² J. H. Woodcock to Polk, August 23, 1875, Polk Papers, Wilson Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 2, Folder 13. ⁴³Noblin, 78.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁵ W. C. Troy, Chairman Senate Branch, Department of Agriculture, Immigration and Statistics, and for the Encouragement of Sheep Husbandry, Polk Paper, Wilson Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, February 21, 1877, Be

commissioner was the head of the board and department, however. The commissioner was given the task to oversee the entire production of agriculture throughout the state and review the collected statistics from each area of farming to see how the overall production of produce was for each year. "Ideally", said the *Observer*, "he should be an experienced, practical farmer, of liberal education, of indomitable energy, and [with a] thorough knowledge of agricultural chemistry."⁴⁶ As a result, Polk met the credentials for this job and became the first Commissioner of Agriculture for the state of North Carolina.

When Polk began his duties as commissioner, he focused on collecting data to know what types of agricultural techniques worked best and relayed this information to the farmers across the state. When he obtained this position, he received many letters of congratulations. One of those letters was from S. H. Robinson, who stated, "If anyone deserves the position of Chairman of the Board of Agriculture, Immigration, and Statistics, you are certainly the man, you have done more for the establishment of the said board than any other man... and with your zeal and energy at its head we may confidently look for success."⁴⁷ Polk was appreciative of the support and knew he had a long way to go to help the farmers. The Department of Agriculture had many objectives which included compiling and analyzing statistics, restocking streams with fish,

A8

distributing educational information, and fostering new industries. To achieve this task, Polk organized groups of farmers in each county and they relayed information to

Noblin, 107.

⁴⁷ S. H. Robinson to Polk, March 5, 1877, Polk Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 2, Folder 19.

⁴⁸ Noblin, 110.

him at certain times of the year about the progress of their farms. Polk continued to act as commissioner for the next year and a half.

During the time that Polk was commissioner, he received letters from farmers across the state. These farmers asked Polk about crops and ways to improve their production. One such farmer was A.J. Caywood. In his letter, he asked Polk about the result of grape production for the entire state during the previous season.⁴⁹ He provided information to Polk about the process the grape farmers went through to 'produce grapes in his area and even supplied sketches of the grape vines and the soil in which they grew. Caywood wanted to know how the production of grapes in his area compared to those across the state and relayed this information to farmers in his area. Many letters such as this were written to Polk. Farmers relied on him to provide them with information on the best methods of farming.

When Polk had ended his stint as commissioner, he went to work for the *Raleigh* newspaper. Then in 1885, Polk came up with a new idea to help farmers. Polk, "...developed plans to establish a weekly paper devoted to agriculture and all its problems."⁵⁰ He chose *The Progressive Farmer* as the name of his magazine. The first issue was on February 10, 1886. Farmers began to support him as soon as the magazine began to be distributed. A farming friend from Harnett County wrote to Polk expressing his views about the establishment of the paper:

The time now is auspicious. The material at hand to make an aggressive campaign in behalf of the defrauded farmers of N. C. is super-abundant. They feel their wrongs and they intend to have redress. Their neglect is too glaring, their impositions are too burdensome- too grievous to be longer tolerated... Let us have the paper, let it be a genuine advocate of the farmer's rights, and have it so,

⁴⁹ A.J. Caywood to Polk, December 3, 1877, Polk Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 2, Folder 22.
Noblin, 149.

exclusively... there is a limit to silence even in the submissiveness of farmers... If ever the farmers needed a paper it is now... [Zebulon] Vance said in his inaugural that, "There is retribution in history." When we farmers succeed in doing for ourselves what we contemplate, then I shall believe it.

This letter along with others he received from farmers kept his spirits high. Polk realized that he could make a significant change for the farmers and their families. With this paper, he strove to make farm life better for both men and women and allow farmers the opportunity to read material that would help them with their farms and production. People were interested in Polk's magazine and he wanted them to be. Polk wanted his magazine to be well known to the public. In the beginning, Polk sent out flyers to attract the attention of farmers so that they could see that a magazine devoted to them was being established. The flyers discussed the rates of the magazine and how *The Progressive Farmer* would keep farmers up-to-date on the changes in agriculture. The flyer stated that "Its chief and special objective will be to promote the interest of our farmers... and it will be free to discuss 'without fear, favor or affection,' any questions affecting their interests, whether it be moral, social, political, or legislative."⁵² The magazine was established as propaganda for different types of changes that needed to be made throughout southern farm life. Polk addressed many topics within *The Progressive Farmer* including agriculture, education, housework, and the Alliance. All of these were added for different reasons, but they all fell under the same issue: to obtain the deserved rights for farmers.

⁵¹ Daniel McKay to Polk, Oct. 12, 1885, Polk Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Box 6, Folder 76.

Zebulon Vance was the governor of North Carolina during the Civil War.

⁵² Leonidas L. Polk, *The Progressive Farmer* Flyer, November, 1885, Polk Paper, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 6, Folder 77.

Polk addressed many topics through *The Progressive Farmer*. The primary reason for establishing the magazine was to help farmers with their overall knowledge of agriculture.⁵³ Noblin states that Polk's heart always remained with the farmers.⁵⁴ Syd Alexander told Polk that he should include agriculture from all parts of the world, that way the farmer would have a whole range of ideas about different techniques.⁵⁵ Polk wanted to farmers to rise above the depression that had begun after the Civil War, so the magazine chiefly focused on this and was considered a magazine for the farmer and his family.⁵⁶

The depression that came about was not directly after the Civil War, but began in 1873.⁵⁷ Prices of goods began to decline and a worldwide depression was created that last until 1896. Wells describes the conditions after the Civil War by stating that the war and ensuing depression actually caused an expansion in agriculture across the United States.⁵⁹ He states, "Altogether, agriculture prices decreased about 30 percent at the same time that production was increasing 50 percent.."⁶⁰ Since the nation and world was going through this crisis, it was imperative that people, such as Polk, should rise up and help the farmers. Noblin states that Polk's essential section of the magazine was to create a section that described new and useful ways to farm.⁶¹ These conditions were here and now with farmers, and Polk strove to advise them in any ways necessary. Polk even spoke of the depression publicly when he was invited to different Alliance meetings. In a

⁵³ Noblin, 149.

⁵⁴ Noblin, 149.

⁵⁵ Noblin, 150.

⁵⁶ Noblin, 151.

⁵⁷ O. V. Wells, "Historical Aspects of Agriculture Adjustments," *Journal of Farm Economics* 19 (1937): 621-633. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 3, 2007).

⁵⁸ Wells, 623.

⁵⁹ Wells, 625.

⁶⁰ Wells, 627.

⁶¹ Noblin, 151.

speech Polk stated, "The farmer sows in faith, he toils in hope, but reaps in disappointment and despair."⁶² He aimed at improving the conditions to the best of his ability.

As one reads through issues of *The Progressive Farmer* they notice the different aspects of farming and education that Polk believed and focused on. In his first few issue of the magazine, he addressed such as ideas as ways to improve tobacco farming⁶³, how to grow fruit trees⁶⁴, and how to breed livestock efficiently.⁶⁵ He even addressed crops that farmers' plant for their own use.⁶⁶ Scholars would also write to Polk to express their thoughts on the farming world. One such person was Professor W. C. Stubbes, of Alabama. He wrote to Polk describing the best method of fertilizer production⁶⁷ With the publication of articles such as these, farmers could read and apply the methods they thought were best.

Polk also speaks to the improvement of education within *The Progressive Farmer*. "Polk had been a life-long believer in practical education. 'It will be a glorious day for North Carolina,... when our young men shall not be ashamed to hang their diplomas..'"⁶⁸ * Noblin states that Polk intended to give attention to agriculture education with his magazine.⁶⁹ Noblin says that Polk was concerned with the "...establishment of a state agricultural and mechanical college.."⁷⁰ Polk realized that it was going to take

Leonidas Polk, "Agricultural Depression, Its Causes — the Remedy," April 22, 1890.
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/polk90/menu.html> (accessed November 10, 2006).

⁶³ Leonidas Polk, "Tobacco," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 10, 1886, 1-5.

Leonidas Polk, "Fruit Trees," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 17, 1886, 2. ,

⁶⁵ Leonidas Polk, "Hog Breeding," *The Progressive Farmer*, March 17, 1886, 1.

⁶⁶ Leonidas Polk, "Planting Potatoes," *The Progressive Farmer*, March 10, 1886, 3.

⁶⁷ W. C. Stubbes, "Fertilizers For Cotton," *The Progressive Farmer*, March 17, 1886, 1.

⁶⁸ Noblin, 171.

⁶⁹ Noblin, 156.

⁷⁰ Noblin, 156.

more than just editorials in his magazine, the farmers needed to rise up and make it known to the government that such a school was a necessity for increased production.' | So a statewide organization of farmers began to take place.

From the first issues, Polk spoke on the idea of establishing an agricultural college. Noblin says that in "...the early issues of the *Progressive Farmer* made plain Polk's central thought: there should be a new college or system of colleges in! | North Carolina devoted to agriculture and the mechanic arts..,"⁷² In the second issue, Polk discusses the Virginia and Georgia colleges that were being established, but how North Carolina had not latched on to this idea. Polk stated, "These institutions have connected with them farms and workshops for the purpose of training the pupils in the use of machinery and tools and for practical illustrations of all departments of work on the farm..,"⁷³ Polk believed that agricultural colleges would aid farmers, and he made farmers aware that they needed to speak out to their congressmen. Later in 1886, he issued a statement in his magazine:

We need an Agricultural College for the practical training of the children of our farmers and other industrial classes, and there is but one way to get it- *build it with the money given to us by the Government for that purpose*. How are we to get it?
BY ELECTING A LEGISLATURE THAT WILL GIVE IT TO US.⁷⁴

This statement spoke to many farmers and in years Polk would prove to be successful; North Carolina State University would be established in 1889 for farmers to continue their education.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Noblin, 156.

⁷² Noblin, 171.

⁷³ Leonidas Polk, "Industrial Education," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 17, 1886, 4.

⁷⁴ Leonidas Polk, "Agricultural Colleges," *The Progressive Farmer*, August 25, 1886.

⁷⁵ Noblin, 178.

Along the same line as education, Polk felt it was necessary to establish experimental farms or stations. In the March of 1886, Polk published an article on the experimental farm. This article stated that the first station began in Germany thirty-five years ago (around 1851).⁷⁶ It consisted of an organization of farmers who wanted to start an experimental farm to help them in areas where problems have occurred or would occur. Essentially, the group of farmers would test different production techniques on a separate piece of property so they would not have to use their own land.⁷⁷ Many farmers noticed the success of this experimental farm, so they adopted the idea to try to advance their farming technology as well. America adopted it from Germany, and Connecticut was the first state to experiment with it. North Carolina, however, was the second, and soon many other states began to implement this idea. These stations helped increase the farmers' knowledge of different farming techniques and allowed them to adopt the ones that created booming production.⁷⁸

Another issue that was addressed in Folk's magazine was that of family. Without the entire family working, a crop could not be sowed and reaped. Polk was the first person to start "farmer's clubs," and he wanted people to see the significance of gathering to share their knowledge, hi the July 28th 1886 issue, Polk described what took place at a farmers' picnic. During this time, farmers began to meet in groups and bring their families as well. In the past it was hard for farmers to be sociable because of the long distances between each farm. So, farmers brought their families to the meetings as well and this practice is still used today among fanning communities. Polk began the article saying that he gave a speech when all the people had arrived and took their places. Each

Leonidas Polk, "Experimental Stations," *The Progressive Farmer*, March 10, 1886, 3.
Ibid., 3. Ibid, 3.

family brought baskets of food, so after the speech, the people began to share the food with one another. After everyone ate, men and women began to participate in activities such as singing and chatting. Polk went on to discuss a statement one man made: "Hold yourself in readiness to be with us again next year, for this is but the beginning," said a happy old father, and we were gratified to hear it, for there is no one class of people who see so little of social pleasure as the farmers."⁷⁹ He closed the article by saying that all farmers and their families should be able to come together once a year to share their knowledge along with their common bonds.⁸⁰

After the war, farming families were left with almost nothing and they had to rely on one another. Farm families faced many problems throughout the South. They also were separated by great distances. Polk allowed his magazine to serve as a public forum so families could communicate with one another. This section was also added to give women a voice of their own. During the late 1800's women had no real control over their lives. Women were supposed to cook and clean and not venture into the affairs of the world. With the magazine, women could communicate with one another. They also played active roles in the Grange. Polk thought it was essential to have women as members because a farm did not run without all of the family together. It took an entire household to make a profit. So, the addition of a family or housekeeping section was made to the magazine.

Polk recognized the significance of family involvement in farming, so he began putting information about meetings of farmers in his magazine. Polk was the first person to start "farmer's clubs," and he wanted people to see the significance of gathering to

Leonidas Polk, "A Farmer's Picnic," *The Progressive Farmer*, July 28, 1886, 3.
Ibid, 3.

share their knowledge. In the July 28th 1886 issue, Polk described what took place at a farmers' picnic. During this time, farmers began to meet in groups and bring their families as well. In the past it was hard for farmers to be sociable because of the long distances between each farm. So, farmers brought their families to the meetings as well and this practice is still used today among farming communities. Polk began the article saying that he gave a speech when all the people had arrived and took their places. Each family brought baskets of food, so after the speech, the people began to share the food with one another. After everyone ate, men and women began to participate in activities such as singing and chatting. Polk went on to discuss a statement one man made: "Hold yourself in readiness to be with us again next year, for this is but the beginning," said a happy old farmer, and we were gratified to hear it, for there is no one class of people who see so little of social pleasure as the farmers."⁸¹ He closed the article by saying that all farmers and their families should be able to come together once a year to share their knowledge along with their common bonds. This idea of coming together as a community is vital because the farmers needed to understand that one person's problem was shared with all the rest. Collaborating as a group instilled them with a sense that they were all struggling, but they could work together to fight and gain back what they had lost.

Polk concentrated mainly on aiding the farmers, but he published a section for women as well. During this time women did not have many rights; they were thought of as the subservient gender. The Grange and Alliance opened its doors to women, however.⁸² "A fourth of all members were women- in some suballiances, as many as half

⁸¹ Leonidas Polk, "A Farmer's Picnic," *The Progressive Farmer*, July 28, 1886, 3.

⁸² Ayers, 233.

were female- and they played an important role in the movement's growth." And women took on roles within these organizations with excitement.⁸⁴ In Ayers' book, he quotes a woman that said,

The Alliance has come to redeem woman from her enslaved condition,.. She is admitted into the organization as the equal of her brother, and the ostracism which has impeded her intellectual progress in the past is not met with.

The women felt liberated to be apart of something that saw them as an equal. Women also took an active role in voting, as well as different business issues that came up.⁸⁵ In this type of atmosphere, women were able to step out of their sphere that society had laid upon them and join the worldly sphere of men. Based on this inclusion of women within the farm groups, it is understandable that Polk wanted to include a section for them to read.

Polk understood that women wanted to be informed of events that were occurring as well being able to communicate to other women.⁸⁶ So, he did not leave them out when developing his magazine. Noblin notes that "...the *Progressive Farmer* had much to offer in the way of recipes, special articles, and poetry" for women. In *The Progressive Farmer*, Polk provided information for them to better the farming homes and farm life in general. In his magazine, each issue had articles on topics such as household, and hints to housekeepers. These articles were addressed directly to women for their benefit. In his first issue, the article "household" was present.⁸⁸ Within this article, Polk supplied women with different hints for cooking and cleaning. It appears later on that cooking and

⁸³ Ayers, 233.

⁸⁴ Ayers, 233.

⁸⁵ Ayers, 233.

⁸⁶ Noblin, 152.

⁸⁷ Noblin, 152.

⁸⁸ Leonidas Polk, "'Household,' *The Progressive Farmer*, February 10, 1886, 6.

cleaning were separated into two articles. In the first article, though, one of the first paragraphs was devoted to cleaning a stove. It is suggested that the stove and other kitchen utensils should be rubbed with paper on a daily basis.⁸⁹ This technique was suggested because it removed black buildup better than washing with soap. Women were looking for any ways to cut down on menial tasks. A section on how to whiten clothes more efficiently was listed in the article. The section recommended mixing borax with clothes to bring back the whiteness. Women began to see the uses of borax in the home and wanted others to benefit from their findings. This article included other things such as baking cookies, cooking an egg pie, and making good coffee. Women always wanted to tell others of their great recipes as well as other things, so the magazine provided a way for them to spread these ideas.

Women benefited from the assortment of articles published and shared ideas with one another. This particular section in the magazine also provided women with other articles to read that would benefit them. One such article recommended parents talk to their children more. The article stated that it was important to talk to children in the home to help promote good ideas. It goes further to say, "they will learn with pleasure from the lips of parents what they deem drudgery to study in books.."⁹¹ Getting together and having family discussions was a good way to teach children lessons they would need to know later in life. The article stated that they would grow up to be fine citizens even if they have a lack of formal education.⁹² Polk obviously felt that education was essential and that children should be sent to school, but if it was impossible to do so,

Leonidas Polk, "'Household," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 10, 1886, 6.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁹¹ Leonidas Polk, "Talk To The Children," *The Progressive Farmer*, April 7, 1886, 6.

⁹² Ibid., 6.

then education at home would be sufficient. Polk understood that the children of today were tomorrow's farmers, so including them in family discussions and treating them as individuals modeled how they should act when they had a family of their own.

Families appreciated any knowledge on how to raise children in the correct manner; this continues to be an important topic today. Women mainly benefited from this information because they were the ones raising the children while men worked. Another subject that interested woman was that of men. One of the earlier articles related to this idea was titled "Choosing a Husband." In this article, it lists helpful hints on landing the right husband. One of the suggestions Polk makes is to find out what kind of job he has. He stated that a woman does not want to support a man, so it is best to find out beforehand if a man has a steady job.⁹⁴ The idea of marrying a man with a job was essential; women usually did not have jobs outside the home. Polk further stated in the article that women should be particular when choosing a mate. He said that if they disapprove of men who smoke or are involved in secret clubs; then they should not consider him a match.⁹⁵ The article further stated that people should be familiar with one another well enough to know if they will be able to live together. Polk also stated that women should not marry men for money, but for love. This statement seems simple enough, but some women did marry for wealth and ended up being miserable throughout their marriage. One of the last suggestions made was to not hurry a proposal from a man by flirting with other men. Polk stated that men can become jealous and not want to marry women who seem to not be able to commit.⁹⁶ He said that if a woman flirts with

Noblin, 151.

Leonidas Polk, "Choosing A Husband," February 17, 1886, 7.

Ibid., 7.

Ibid., 7.

many men, then it is possible that she will get a bad reputation. Polk supplied information such as this because people needed to come together and know how to socialize. Family was an important concept to him.⁹⁷

Technology, education, and family were all very important to Polk. He intended to improve all areas to create a better situation for the farmer. The one issue that was brought up in later times was that of the Farmers' Alliance; the days of receiving less than half the price of produce had come to an end. Farmers wanted the depression to be over and to regain the life they once had. It was necessary for *The Progressive Farmer* to contain information about the Alliance so it would obtain more members. Polk felt that through the Alliance, farmers would rise above their conditions and overcome the industry that desperately wanted to take over the country. The cause for organization was substantial and Polk intended to help at all costs.⁹⁸

Essentially, the Alliance was a large group of farmers across the South that strived to change the situation of the southern farmers. The chapters of the Alliance were divided by the states. Elected officials met to discuss the issues of their states. These officials would take the issues before the state legislatures to argue their demands. "The Alliance adopted the characteristic structure of a secret society, with passwords, oaths, rituals, and a gradually elaborated complex hierarchy of organizers, lecturers, and other officials."⁹⁹ Argersinger states that this form was like the Grange, but some of the techniques of other organizations were incorporated in.¹⁰⁰ So, they Alliance wanted to be

Noblin, 151.

Noblin, 157.

Argersinger, 566.

¹⁰ Argersinger, 566.

seen as a tight knit organization that supported its brethren. Eventually, they became involved in national politics through the 1896 presidential election.

Polk began the organization of the North Carolina Farmers' Alliance because he wanted the farmers to come together to resolve the issues that they dealt with in their everyday lives. Polk believed that the farmers need to organize.¹⁰¹ In later issues of *The Progressive Farmer*, Polk began to publish information from Granges throughout the state. He would also name the members of each Grange. It was¹⁰² an attempt to¹⁰³

provoke farmers to join their local chapters. He would also supply any changes of the Alliance such as their platform and any information that would aid the farmers.¹⁰⁴ One of the earlier articles in *The Progressive Farmer* was a list of the demands farmers proposed

¹⁰⁵

to the Shreveport legislature. The individuals that made up this committee were farmers who represented all the southern states. All the resolutions that they passed within the Alliance were unanimous. The first demand of a National Alliance was the recognition of all the organizations associated with the Alliance.¹⁰⁶ The recognition would help promote a better financial situation for the Alliance as a whole. A number of the following demands were related to property. The Alliance demanded that property be affordable for them as well as other individuals and corporations.¹⁰⁷ The farmers wanted their farming lands returned to them, but prices were so high that neither they nor other people in similar financial situations could afford to buy them. The Alliancemen were

¹⁰¹ Noblin, 157.

¹⁰² Leonidas Polk, "The Alliance," *The Progressive Farmer*, January 5, 1888, 1. ¹⁰³

Leonidas Polk, "The Alliance," *The Progressive Farmer*, January 12, 1888, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Leonidas Polk, "Demands Of The National Farmers' Alliance Upon Congress," *The Progressive Farmer*, January 5, 1888, 4. ¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Leonidas Polk, "Demands Of The National Farmers' Alliance Upon Congress," *The Progressive Farmer*, January 5, 1888, 4. ¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 4.

upset at the fact that big corporations had a monopoly on most of the lands. By making the property affordable to buy and taxing farmers the same as corporations, the farmers would have more land to farm. The Alliance also demanded that debts be dissolved by

1rs

coining more money. Farmers could not pay off debts that had been incurred during and after Reconstruction. The Alliance believed that producing more money would get rid of the debts that farmers and other people had acquired since Reconstruction. The Alliance also requested a graduated income tax. By creating this system, farmers would pay a lower tax than the wealthy. Another demand that was more reasonable was the direct election of senators.^{1C9} By electing the senators, farmers as well as other people could put the men in office that would help them politically. During the lifetime of the Alliance, this demand was not met, but in later years the government adopted this resolution. All of the demands the Alliance put forth were significant and Polk wanted to publish them in his magazine. By making these issues public, farmers would become aware of what the Alliance was striving for. It was time to take a stand and make their needs known.

Publishing these demands was just one way Polk made farmers aware of the Alliance. Polk also brought in his own view about politics and farmers becoming involved. In the February 16th, 1888 issue, Polk talked about the farmers' right to be in the political world. He stated that a farmer owes, "a high and solemn duty to his family, to society, to his country and to the world, which with the privileges and prerogatives belonging to American citizenship cannot be performed, if he ignores those things which

Ibid., 4.

Ibid., 4.

pertain to good government."¹⁰ Polk went on to state that it was the farmer's duty to immerse themselves in politics and be active in it.¹¹ Farmers must be active in the voting process to eliminate those who are corrupt, and put into office those individuals who will make the country a better place. Polk further said that every individual should have an equal opportunity to express his view through the ballot. He stated that through a direct election of individuals that we would have a true "expression of the will of the people."¹² The Alliancemen needed to take a stand and put forth their views and resolutions. Polk believed that one of the best ways to accomplish this was to vote for the right candidate, the one who would help the farmers.

Polk stated that the farmer needs to become an active member of the governing body in order to see changes in their lives.¹³ J. R. Gilchrist, a scholar, expressed these same views in an article he wrote for *The Progressive Farmer*. He stated the different reasons for the depression that are occurring and that the Alliance among other organizations was trying to get rid of this problem.¹⁴ His first argument was that the merchant charged too much money for the produce that farmers purchased in the merchant's general stores.¹⁵ He stated that he cannot blame the merchant, but cannot understand why the government allows this extortion of prices.¹⁶ Gilchrist also said that lawyers, ministers and doctors are paid an extreme amount of money for what they do.¹⁷ If these prices were lowered, then farmers would have the cash they need to produce a

¹⁰ Leonidas Polk, "The Farmer in Politics," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 16, 1888, 4.

¹¹ Ibid, 4.

¹² Ibid, 4.

¹³ Noblin, 157.

¹⁴ J. R. Gilchrist, "The Causes of Depression," *The Progressive Farmer*, April 10, 1888, 1.

¹⁵ Ibid, 1.

¹⁶ J. R. Gilchrist, "The Causes of Depression," *The Progressive Farmer*, April 10, 1888, 1.

new crop each year.¹¹⁸ The last area the article covered was monopolies. Gilchrist stated that the monopolies have caused the depression that the farmers, along with the nation, were experiencing.¹¹⁹ As stated before by others, the monopolies charge too much for shipment of goods and only pay the farmer half or less than what it took to grow and ship their goods. Gilchrist stated, "unless we are paralyzed by the presence of this giant, we can check its progress, and unless we intend to be slaves, we must check it."¹²⁰

Gilchrist believed that farmers could obtain the prices they needed if they paid attention to these monopolies and spoke out against the monopolies' misuse of market power. He ended his argument by stating that farmers needed to get to the polls and vote for those that could be a voice for them in government and right the wrongs that had been done to the farmers.¹²² This belief was true among many people involved in the Alliance and true with Polk as well. Polk made this fact known throughout his magazine.

Polk wanted to give the farmers a text with which they could progress. This is why the title of the magazine is *The Progressive Farmer*. During this time farmers were trying new techniques relating to the production of their crops. Southern families were also striving to become more modern, Polk provided them information to help them progress in that area as well. Polk wanted farm-life to be better than it had been right after the Reconstruction era. He published articles on agriculture, education, housework, and the Alliance to help people know and understand the developing world around them. Most individuals did not have extensive social or professional networks. Farmers were able to keep up with the latest techniques within their fields of agriculture, as well as

¹¹⁸Ibid., 1.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 1.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹²² Ibid., 1.

schools they could attend to be better educated in certain areas of agriculture production. The information about the Alliance also provided them with news about the political happenings in North Carolina as well as the nation. They would know when and where meetings were held and if they could travel to the place to support their views. | The housework section helped women keep up with the latest fashions and ways of preparing food and running a household. They could look to these articles for ways to improve the life that they lived. Altogether *The Progressive Farmer* helped mold and better the lives of farm families across the state.

Annotated Primary Bibliography

Caywood, A.J. to Polk, December 3, 1877, Polk Papers Wilson Library Special Collections, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 2, Folder 22.

The letter Caywood writes to Polk is about grapes and the production throughout the state at the time. He wrote in his ideas about how to produce the best crop (even providing a sketch) and asked Polk what his views were.

Farm and Fireside. "Talk To The Children," *The Progressive Farmer*, April 7, |1886,6.

This article was published in *The Progressive Farmer* because its' opinions run parallel to that of Polk. It discussed how to include children in daily activities within the house. The article discussed the right ways to talk to children and raise them.

Gilchrist, J. R. "The Causes of Depression," *The Progressive Farmer*, April 10, 1888, 1.

Gilchrist lists the problems behind the depression in relation to farmers. Some of the problems he lists are the corporate monopolies, the salaries of professionals, and merchant prices.

McKay, Daniel to Polk, Oct. 12, 1885, Polk Papers, Wilson Library Special Collections, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 6 Folder 76.

This is a personal letter that McKay sent to Polk. He began by discussing the happenings in his life, then proceeds to talk about the need for a campaign for the farmers. McKay tell Polk that the paper is a way to been this effort to help farmers rise above the depression.

N. C. Horticultural Society. "Shipping Fruit," *The Progressive Farmer*, July 7, |1886,2.

Farmers need to make the most profit they could off of their produce, so this organization wrote an article about how to pick and ship peaches. They discussed how delicate one has to be when handling the peaches and then they go into detail about the correct ways of packing peaches so they will not bruise.

New England Homestead. "Agricultural Education," *The Progressive Farmer*, September 22, 1886, 4.

This article was about the states that were establishing agricultural colleges. It discussed the programs that the colleges were offering and how students were becoming involved in hands-on projects. At the end of this article, Polk supplied

his own opinion about the colleges, stating that he hoped North Carolina would join the ranks.

Polk, Leonidas L. *The Progressive Farmer* Flyer, November, 1885, Polk Paper, Box 6, Folder 77.

This flyer discussed the prices of the magazine. It then summarizes the purpose behind its establishment: to aid farmers in every aspect of life.

Polk, Leonidas. "'Household," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 10, 1886, 6.

This article, like the other that came after it, contained recipes and ways in which to clean effectively. Women wrote to Polk giving him their advice and he would publish it in this section of the magazine.

Polk, Leonidas. "Fruit Trees," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 17, 1886, 2.

Polk published this article to explain to farmers the right season and way to plant fruit trees. In this article, he talked about the correct soil to grow and how deep the trees should be planted. He also added in information about caring for the trees after they were planting. Trees required pruning and fertilizer, which Polk discussed.

Polk, Leonidas. "Industrial Education," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 17, 1886, 4.

Polk discussed his view on creating an agricultural college in North Carolina and why it was important. He felt that farmers needed to be educated in order to be more successful.

Polk, Leonidas. "Choosing A Husband," February 17, 1886, 7.

This article was dedicated to women who were looking for a husband, discussed what to do when choosing a suitable mate and how to take care of a husband.

Polk, Leonidas. "Planting Potatoes," *The Progressive Farmer*, March 10, 1886, 3.

Potatoes were a new crop to the area, so Polk supplied farmers with information on how to plant and tend to them in North Carolina. He discussed the type of soil they should be planted in and what kind of parasites could ruin a crop.

Polk, Leonidas. "A Farmer's Picnic," *The Progressive Farmer*, July 28, 1886,2

This article gave an overview of one Grange meeting that Polk attended. Polk discussed every detail that happened. The people who attended listened to a speech, ate a meal cooked by the wives, and participated in singing.

Polk, Leonidas. "Demands Of The National Farmers' Alliance Upon Congress," *The Progressive Farmer*, January 5, 1888, 4.

Polk listed the demands of the farmers from Shreveport. The demands listed here were heard throughout each individual Alliance.

Polk, Leonidas. "The Farmer in Politics," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 16, 1888, 4.

Polk felt that the farmer had a duty to become involved in politics. Farmers needed to elect officials that supported the opinions of farmers and struggled to help them during the depression years.

Polk, Leonidas. "Agricultural Depression, Its Causes—the Remedy," April 22, 1890. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/polk90/menu.html> (accessed November 10, 2006).

This speech listed all the causes of the depression. Polk went into detail about the debt that farmers had obtained and the origin of these debts. He discussed monopolies companies had on land and the outrageous prices of transportation of the railroad. He then discussed the ways in which to dissolve the depression which are the same ideas the Alliance believed.

Poore, B. P. "Experimental Stations," *The Progressive Farmer*, March 10, 1886, 3.

Polk believed that farmers could benefit from this type of agriculture, so he wanted to make known this inventive way to experiment with different crops. He explained the process of experimental stations and discussed its origin.

Robinson, S. H. to Polk, March 5, 1877, Polk Papers, Wilson Library Special Collections, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 2 Folder 19.

Robinson was a farming friend who wrote to Polk to express his excitement about Polk being elected the Commissioner of Agriculture.

Stubbes, W. C.. "Fertilizers For Cotton," *The Progressive Farmer*, March 17, 1886, 1.

Stubbes discusses the right mixture of fertilizer to create a more plentiful crop of cotton.

Troy, W. C. Chairman Senate Branch, Department of Agriculture, Immigration and Statistics, and for the Encouragement of Sheep Husbandry, Raleigh, February 21, 1877, Box 2, Folder 19.

This was the bill that Troy wrote up for the establishment of the department. It included all the factors that went along with the creation of the department. It also had quotes from Troy and Zebulon B. Vance on the department.

Union Republic. "Tobacco," *The Progressive Farmer*, February 10, 1886, 5.

Farmers needed to know the correct tobacco to plant and how to go about caring for it, so the Union Republic provided an article for the farmers to learn from. It listed the right plant to choose, the soil it should be planted in, and signs of when to harvest.

Woodcock, J. H. to Polk, August 23, 1875, Polk Papers Wilson Library Special Collections, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Box 2, Folder 13.

Woodcock wrote to Polk to let him know that he wanted to live and work in Polkton. He told Polk when he would arrive and the wages he would work for.

Secondary Bibliography

Argersinger, Peter H. "Organizing the Farmers' Movement." *Reviews in American History* 4 (1976): 565-570. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

Ayers, Edward L. *The Promise of a New South: Life After Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Barnes Donna A. *Farmers in Rebellion*.

Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984.

Cooper, William J. Jr. and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History* (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1991), 383.

This book discussed the complete history of the South. It went into detail about misunderstanding that people have when learning about the South. It also explained in great detail the great events that struck the South. I focused on the events after the Civil War and the depression that hit the farmers.

Escott, Paul D. et al ed. *Major Problems in the History of the American South* vol. 2. *The New South* 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Gaither, Gerald H. *Blacks and the Populist Revolt: Ballots and Bigotry in the "New South."* Alabama: The University of Alabama: 1977.

Hibbard, Benjamin Horace. "Legislative Pressure Groups Among Farmers." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 179 ((1935): 17-24. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

Hicks, John D.. *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party*. 1 ed. Nebraska: Bison Book Printing, 1961.

Kincaid, Larry. "Victims of Circumstance: An Interpretation of Changing Attitudes Toward Republican Policy Makers and Reconstruction." *The Journal of American History* 57 (1970): 48-66. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

McMath, Robert C. *Populist Vanguard*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975.

Noblin, Stuart. *Leonidas LaFayette Polk: Agrarian Crusader*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949.

This book is a biography of Folk's entire life. It provided insight to how Polk felt on certain issues and supplied parts of speeches that Polk made throughout his career. It also contained the opinions of other leaders and farmers during this time.

Pyne, John and Gloria Sesso. "A Humanities Approach for Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom." *The History Teacher* 31 (1998): 467-494. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 4, 2007).

Steelman, Lala Carr. *The North Carolina Farmers' Alliance: A Political History, 1887-1893*. Greenville: East Carolina University Publications Department of History, 1985.

Schwartz, Michael. *Radical Protest and Social Structure: The Southern Farmers' Alliance and Cotton Tenancy, 1880-1890*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.

Wells, O. V. "Historical Aspects of Agriculture Adjustments." *Journal of Farm Economics* 19 (1937): 621-633. www.jstor.org/ (accessed April 3, 2007)^

Woodward, C. Vann. *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913*. Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1951.