The Civil War's Last Campaign: James B. Weaver, the Greenback-Labor Party and the Politics of Race and Section

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piled biographical sketches of the major individuals mentioned in the accounts. The prologue and introductions to sections provide invaluable continuity to the many narratives, so that all the prison experiences of the 12th Iowa Infantry may be read as one.


Reviewer Stephen Engle is professor of history and director of graduate programs at Florida Atlantic University. He is the author of several books and articles on leading Civil War military figures, including *Struggle for the Heartland: The Campaigns from Fort Henry to Corinth* (2001).

Waldemar Ager’s *Colonel Heg and His Boys* provides invaluable material on the role of the Norwegian Fifteenth Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment’s involvement in the Civil War. It is not, however, a history of the regiment. More than half of the volume is taken up by the diary of Colonel Hans Christian Heg, detailing the role he and his regiment played in the war and the battles in which his unit was engaged. Colonel Heg and his boys fought mainly in the war’s western theater, participating in the battles of Chickamauga and Stone’s River. The latter portion of the volume includes short essays and incidental observations by Heg on particular battles and the Norwegian Regiment’s losses. He also includes letters from other Norwegian soldiers in the 15th Wisconsin, detailing their experiences and impressions of the war.

Students of the Civil War will find this a welcome addition to the growing body of literature focusing on the ethnic dimensions of the conflict and how midwestern ethnic groups contributed to the effort to preserve the Union.


Reviewer Wallace Hettle is associate professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the author of *The Peculiar Democracy: Southern Democrats in Peace and War* (2001).

Mark Lause’s book traces the 1880 presidential campaign of Iowa congressman James B. Weaver on the Greenback-Labor ticket. The title of
the book seems to portend an analysis of the ways that the issues of
the Civil War era—the politics of race and section—cast their shadow
over politics in the Gilded Age. In fact, this book is primarily a nar-
rowly focused narrative of the making (and undoing) of a third party
political insurgency.

Nodding to a generation of scholarship on the role of republican
ideas in American radicalism, Lause portrays Weaver and the Green-
back-Labor Party as drawing on the republican legacy of the American
Revolution. But he goes a step further, arguing that the antebellum Re-
publican Party had "plebian or even socialist roots" (9-10). Unfortu-
nately, he offers little evidence to buttress this remarkable assertion, and
devotes little attention to Weaver’s career prior to 1880. After tracing
the origins of the Greenback movement in postbellum labor reform
circles, he proceeds to the heart of the book: an account of Weaver’s
1880 campaign and the political infighting that it provoked in both the
North and the South.

Lause argues that Weaver’s chief campaign plank, currency reform,
raised fundamental issues about class and power. Sectionalism under-
mined that campaign in the South, as southern Bourbons engaged in
fraud and intimidation to suppress Weaver’s candidacy. Ironically,
southern outrages against democratic rights strengthened Weaver’s
chief opponents in the North, the Republicans, as outrage over Bour-
bon aggression created a northern backlash that eroded the potential
for insurgency in traditionally Republican states. Writing with a keen
moral fervor, Lause also suggests that Weaver and his campaign suf-
fered from “treachery” and “betrayal” at the hands of the two major
parties (183). He argues that although the Weaver campaign garnered
only 300,000 votes, it served as a forerunner to later radical movements,
including the socialist campaigns of Eugene Debs.

Lause’s book is often tendentious, marred by typographical errors,
and based almost entirely on newspaper accounts supplemented by
secondary sources. The nearly exclusive reliance on newspapers and
the virtual absence of archival research means that his book yields few
new insights into Gilded Age politics. It offers little of interest on
Weaver, his Iowa background, or his constituents. Further, the au-
thor’s extensive discussion of ideological bickering within the socialist
press over Weaver’s third-party movement suffers as the author fails
to illumine the moral and intellectual world within which those de-
bates were shaped.