

NEBRASKA

FOLKLORE

PAMPHLET EIGHTEEN

FARMERS' ALLIANCE

SONGS

OF THE
1890'S

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LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT
NEBRASKA DECEMBER, 1938

NEBRASKA FOLKLORE PAMPHLETS
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Number Eighteen
NEBRASKA FARMERS' ALLIANCE SONGS OF THE 1890'S
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These Farmers' Alliance songs have been gleaned from the files of the Farmers' Alliance—the official organ of the Nebraska State Alliance. This weekly paper, published in the 1890's, was later known by a variety of titles, such as the Alliance-Independent, Independent, Nebraska-Independent, and the Wealth-Makers. It was always liberal and strongly Populistic in its views.

The Farmers' Alliance party was formally organized in Lincoln, Nebraska, January 5-6, 1888, when delegates from 25 counties met in Lincoln. This organization—later absorbed by the nation-wide Populist Party—was an attempt on the part of the farmers of the State to secure, through political means, higher prices for their farm products (hogs and cattle, at this time, sold for two cents a pound, corn for ten cents a bushel); lower freight rates (it took one bushel of wheat to send another bushel to market); and protection against unfair farm foreclosures. All these grievances had been caused, or aggravated by, rampant speculation, drouth and financial panic.

A third party, in those turbulent times, seemed to be the only answer to these problems, since nearly every farmer in the State was dissatisfied with the two major political parties, both of which seemed to favor the large monopolies and Eastern bankers. This attitude was well expressed in a song called "The Hayseed," adapted to the tune of "Save a Poor Sinner Like Me."

I was once a tool of oppression,
And as green as a sucker could be,
And monopolies banded together
To beat a poor hayseed like me.

The railroads and old party bosses
Together did sweetly agree;
And they thought there would be little trouble
In working a hayseed like me.

But now I've roused up a little
And their greed and corruption I see.
And the ticket we vote next November
Will be made up of hayseeds like me.

Throughout Nebraska, from 1885 to 1905, crusading farmers gathered at

hundreds of political rallies, barbecues, and picnics to hear orators from among their own people, many of whom had never spoken to a crowd before, discuss the pressing questions of the day. To reach these meetings it was necessary for many farmers to drive in clumsy lumber wagons for long distances. Seemingly endless parades of farm wagons were arranged in order to impress the spectators. Sixteen hundred teams paraded into Hastings alone for one meeting. In order to add excitement to these parades, and create diversion between speeches at the rallies, songs were sung. Glee Clubs were organized, the most popular of which, the Cat Creek Glee Club of Custer County, became so popular that it sang at the National Populist Convention held in Omaha in 1892.

But, for the most part, the farmers and their sympathizers did their own singing. They especially liked parodies of familiar verse or ballads, arranged to that they could easily be sung to old familiar tunes, such as "Nellie Gray," or "Sweet Memorie." All the songs in this collection are of this nature, by members or sympathizers of the Nebraska Farmers' Alliance party and revealing much of the tense, revivalistic nature of their campaign.

ALLIANCE SONG

By C. E. Vaughn

(Tune: Marching Along)

The farmers are gathering from near and from far,
 The alliance is sounding the call for the war.
 The battle is raging, it will be fearful and long,
 We'll gird on our armor and be marching along.
 The battle is raging, it will be fearful and long.
 Men are before us that would lead us astray,
 But let us not follow or turn from the way;
 The password our strength, be this ever our song,
 We'll join the alliance and go marching along.
 We've enlisted for life and will camp on the field;
 With faith in the alliance we never will yield.
 United we stand, both trusty and strong,
 We will pull together and be marching along.
 Through hardships and trials our gold we must bring,
 For here we contend against monopolies ring;
 But one thing is certain, we cannot go wrong,
 If we pull altogether while marching along.

Chorus:

Marching along, we are marching along,
 Stand by each other while marching along.
 The battle is raging, 'twill be fearful and strong,
 Then pull altogether while marching along.

MARCHING FOR FREEDOM

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: Marching Through Georgia)

The John H. Powers mentioned in the chorus was president of the Nebraska farmers' Alliance, and was a candidate for governor on the people's independent ticket during the campaign of 1890.

The farmers of Nebraska now are in a fearful plight,
For years they have been worse than slaves; it is a woeful sight,
To see the way they have been robbed by banks and railroads' might—
But now they are marching for freedom.

Chorus:

Hurrah for Powers, a farmer true and grand;
Hurrah; For Powers we pledge our heart and hand—
And ne'er again shall lawyer or banker rule our land—
For we are marching for freedom.

Oh, nevermore to party rule the farmer's knee shall bow,
To work his own salvation out he takes a solemn vow,
He'll vote for home and justice, for wife and baby now,
For we are marching for freedom.

No banks shall corner the exchange provided by the State,
No speculator shall get rich on wealth that we create,
No railroad e'er again shall tax three fourths* our crops for
freight,
For we are marching for freedom.

THE PAUPER'S COWHIDES

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: Kingdom Coming)

The reference in the first line is to Bartlett Richards, president of the Nebraska Land and Feeding Company and a much hated ranchman, who, in 1906, six years after this song was composed, was convicted for "suborning and aiding fraud and perjury in the entry of public land."

Say, Richards have you seen the paupers,
With a mortgage on their lands,
Going to congress with their cowhides,
And honest horny hands.

* Nebraska farmers, at this time, complained that freight rates were so high that it cost a bushel of corn to ship another bushel of corn to market.

They saw the schemers each year stealing
 Their hard earned crops away,
 And their sod houses they are leaving
 To right their wrongs today.

Chorus:

To congress now, ho! ho!
 The cowhide boots will run.
 This must be the hayseed jubilo,
 And the pauper's kingdom come.

Money changers say that by no paupers
 Their demands shall be denied;
 They scorn them now as long ago
 Scorned a pauper cricified. [sic]
 They judge men by the wealth they've stolen
 And the patent boots they wear;
 Say drones of earth alone can rule us,
 That no cowboy rule they'll bear.

They used to tan the skins of paupers
 Down in the eastern land;
 But Richards' patent turns them out
 With skins already tanned.
 But the banker's power will soon be broken
 Their gold will lose its sway;
 When the cowhide boots get into congress
 They'll bring a better day.

GOOD-BYE, MY PARTY, GOOD-BYE

Air: "Good-bye, My Lover, Good-bye."

(Reference is to the two established parties.)

It was no more than a year ago,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 That I was in love with my party so,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 To hear aught else I never would go;
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 Like the rest I made a great blow;
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.

Chorus:

Bye, party, bye, lo; bye, party, bye, lo;
 Bye, party, bye, lo; good-bye, my party, good-bye.

I was often scourged with the party lash,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.

The bosses laid on with demands for cash;
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 To do aught else I deemed it rash,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 So I had to take it or lose my hash,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.

I was raised up in the kind of school,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 That taught to bow to money rule,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 And it made of me a "Kansas Fool,"
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 When they found I was a willing tool,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.

The old party is on the downward track,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 Picking its teeth with a tariff tack,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 With a placard pinned upon his back,
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.
 That plainly states, "I will never go back;"
 Good-bye, my party, good-bye.

GOOD-BYE, OH TOMMY, GOOD-BYE

BY Mrs. J. T. Kellie

Tom Benton was president of the Western Exchange Fire and Marine Insurance Company. He had made loans, at high rates of interest, to the farmers.

Tom Benton is on the G. O. P.
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 That is going down like a ship at sea,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 Neath the waves of justice you will be,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 No farmer will shed a tear for thee,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.

Chorus:

Bye Tommy, bye lo, bye Tommy, bye lo—
 Bye Tommy, bye lo, good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.

The farmers know for 'tis very plain,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 You robbed them for years of half their grain,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 But we tell you now in words most plain,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 No railroad shark shall rob us again,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.

We owe it to you and the board they say,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 That we are not free of debt today,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 You wished us in debt to interest pay,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 Like all other dogs you've had your day,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.

Your deeds now written upon a roll--
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 Condemn you to the bottomless hole--
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 While Satan safely watches your soul,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.
 Farmers will gladly shovel his coal,
 Good-bye, O Tommy, good-bye.

THE DONKEY'S SONG

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: Johnny Comes Marching Home)

As I close to the railroad camp passed by the other day,
 I much delighted was to hear the long eared donkey's bray,
 It sure was Howe's and Holdrege's voice and this they seemed to say:

Oh, Thomas Benton is his name,
 Yonc huh, yonc huh,
 That is well known to railroad fame,
 Yonc huh, yonc huh,
 Leese traitor to the railroads turned,
 But to his sorrow soon he learned,
 We had our own way
 When Tommy was on the board.

When Tommy gets on the board again,
 Yonc huh, yonc huh,
 When Tommy gets on the board again,
 Yonc huh, yonc huh,
 Us poor railroads will have to show--
 For by the past we surely know
 We'll have our own way
 When Tommy is on the board.

Oh, Tommy, we are not afraid--
 Yonc huh, yonc huh,
 We keep in mind the bargain made,
 Yonc huh, yonc huh,
 To hide the cheek of brass he stole
 He gave a mortgage on his soul,

Which gives us our way
When Tommy is on the board.

When we steal half the farmer's grain
Yonc huh, yonc huh,
Shrewd Tommy, he does not explain,
Yonc huh, yonc huh,
But coolly looks each office o'er
And finds place for one brother more,
Yes, we've our own way
When Tommy is on the board.

VOTE FOR ME

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: Father Come Home)

Oh father, dear father, come vote for me now
My clothes are so worn out and old,
You said you would get me some new ones this fall;
But now wheat and corn are all sold.
The roads took the best, the banks get the rest,
And nothing is left us at all;
We thought if we worked through the heat and the cold,
We'd have lots of new things this fall.

Chorus:

Be free, for me;
Come, father, please vote for me now.
Oh father, dear father, come vote for me now,
Heed not what the railroad men say,
Of course they will tell you they love you the best,
You know that was always the way;
Yet our sod house is old and lets in the cold,
And Ma's always patching, you see;
The rest of the children, their shoes are so old—
There's no one can bring cobs but me.

Oh father, dear father, come vote for me now,
You know that I can't go to school,
For summer or winter, year round I must work,
And when I am grown be a fool;
Oh what can I do when grown up like you,
And nothing I know but to save,
Free land will be gone and naught else can I do,
But be to the rich men a slave.

Oh father, dear father, come vote for me now,
Let money men threaten or pray,

They told you last summer we all worked too hard,
 This year we are lazy they say;
 Dear father, that's right, oh, what a glad sight,
 That old railroad ticket thrown down,
 Now Ma will be hopeful, her heart will be light,
 I'll have clothes like rich boys in town.

WHO HAS MANAGED

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: Twenty Years Ago)

I've traveled through the State, dear Tom,
 We long have loved so well,
 And what's the matter with things here
 I want to have you tell.
 The working class are very poor—
 I've looked them o'er and o'er—
 Say who has managed this great State
 For twenty years or more?

You mind well where the Cottonwood
 Flows down towards the Blue,
 Where we one time went after wood,
 Hid from the bloody Sioux,
 Near where the Mayflower schoolhouse stands
 They chased the buffalo,
 While we up near the bridge were hid
 Some twenty years ago.

Soon schooners filled with hardy men
 Came o'er the barren plain,
 And where last year was prairie grass
 Were fields of golden grain.
 Snug houses were built and orchards made;
 Ah! all we ever know
 To gain homes what plots were laid,
 Some twenty years ago?

Of all the men who helped to change
 This land from desert plain,
 But very few are left to know;
 The others have again
 Been driven as we once drove
 Red men and buffalo—
 Robbed of the homes for which they toiled
 Some twenty years ago.

The men who settled up these plains
 When they were in their prime

Are gray haired now—hard toil has made
 Them old before their time.
 With splendid crops of stock and grain,
 They're poorer than before;
 Say who has managed this great State
 For twenty years or more?

The Negroes of the South, dear Tom,
 Before the cruel war,
 Were better sheltered, better fed,
 And better clothes they wore;
 Yet slaves through all the years ne'er worked
 So hard on earth before.
 Say who has managed this great State
 For twenty years or more?

The only ones who've prospered here—
 It made my blood to boil—
 Were bankers, lawyers, railroad men
 Or men who never toil.
 Why should they now own all the wealth
 I've pondered o'er and o'er;
 Say who has managed this great State
 For twenty years or more?

OUR JOHN

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: Yankee Doodle)

John Thurston was general solicitor for the Union Pacific Railroad.

John Thurston is a railroad man,
 As such he is a dandy;
 He gives the farmers good advice
 Whenever it comes handy.

Chorus:

Our John he does the farmer love,
 Although he works for boodle—
 They ought to take his good advice
 And still sing Yankee Doodle.

He says if we Van Wyck had run
 In place of Farmer Powers,
 Van Wyck would just have made things hum
 And victory been ours.

Our John twelve thousand gets a year,
 To work against the people,
 The while he says his love for them
 Is higher than a steeple.

Our John he loves the bloody shirt,
 And often sings its praises,
 And each advance of railroad freights
 Beneath its folds he raises.

SPREAD THE NEWS

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Air: Sweet Memorie)

Oh, the farmers have united,
 And their actions will be cited,
 When the next election comes;
 It is men we want for work,
 Men who won't their duty shirk,
 Fire the politicians and the bums.

Then give us righteous farmer men,
 For they'll help us when they can,
 And ignore the pocketbook and bottle;
 They know the wily schemer's game,
 And they beat him just the same,
 For they work for right and not for boodle.

So we'll stand by them steadfast,
 'Twill be victory at the last,
 And will prove that we are true;
 Then our rights will be respected,
 And our men will be elected,
 While we bear the banners blue.

We want railroad legislation,
 Our children must have education,
 Therefore, we should share the pocketbook;
 The railroads then will lose their grip,
 And the "pass" no more will slip,
 But must travel on his own hook.

Then to your work, Oh, men,
 And train your hand to use the men,
 That all the world may know,
 That while we labor for the right,
 We do the work with all our might,
 And fear no politician foe.

Chorus:

Oh, come ye jolly farmers,
 And join our legal band;
 That ye may share the profit,
 Of the labor of your hand.

WHAT'S WRONG

BY W. E. R. Hoping

Oh what is the matter? Oh tell me what's wrong;
That the farmers and workingmen can't get along;
Though the harvest is great that we get in the fall,
When the spring rolls around we have nothing at all.

Chorus:

Rouse, sons of freedom; Something's not right;
Drive out the darkness, let in the light.
There is over-production it has often been said,
Where in parts of our land they are calling for bread.
If it's overproduction, and that is conceded,
Why not enjoy it 'till there is more needed?

But the cry comes rolling up over our land,
Give us money in volume to meet the demand;
We must have money to exchange production,
Pay mortgage and debts, or we go to destruction.

What's wrong, that our government favors a faction,
Who work for themselves and cause a contraction?
The interest we pay to these great financiers
Will ruin us all in a very few years.

When money is issued on real estate,
And the interest is low, say one per cent rate;
Won't money be plenty and prices be high?
And we'll pay all our debts "in the sweet by and by."

The board of trade and the great corporations—
Who live on our earnings, and ruin all nations—
We must break their shackles, for slaves we'll not be
But we'll say to the world "our country is free!"

THE INDEPENDENT MAN

BY Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: The Girl I Left Behind Me)

I was a party man one time,
The party would not mind me—
That's all for which I have to thank
The party's left behind me.

Chorus:

An older, sadder, poorer man
Sure every year did find me—
That's all for which I have to thank
The party left behind me.

I asked that from the railroad's clutch
 A way out they should find me;
 One party answered me, "not much,"
 The other would not mind me.

I was to moneyed men a slave—
 They said it was a fable;
 One party would not try to save,
 The other was not able.

A true and intependent man
 You ever more shall find me—
 I work and vote, and never regret
 The party left behind me.

THE INDEPENDENT BROOM

By Mrs. J. T. Kellie

(Tune: Star Spangled Banner)

Oh, say, did you ever in years long gone by,
 When you bachelor's hall were so lonesomely keeping,
 To sweep with an old lop-sided broom try?
 If so, you when done surely felt like weeping.
 To clean up a room you will own, I presume,
 In twenty-four years one should have a new broom.
 The dust it will raise may be stifling and great,
 But the broom Independent will clean up the State.

On the floor thickly strown all over the State,
 Are sown in confusion the railroad free passes.
 The new broom will soon sweep them in piles that are great,
 And the proceeds we'll use for the good of the masses.
 Bring to light soon, it must, laws now hidden by dust,
 Brighten up constitution now covered with rust,
 Yes, it will soon have everything in ship shape—
 The new broom Independent that's sweeping the State.

And thus was it ever when freemen did strive
 To clean up rubbish laws which create the rich classes.
 To let freedom's light in so people might thrive
 Brush the dust from the laws made to protect the masses.
 Then the beauty is seen of the broom new and clean,
 You must surely admire the broom that I mean,
 'Tis the broom Independent, new, honest, and straight,
 With which brave sons of toil are now sweeping the State.

The editorial page of the Alliance-Independent for October 26, 1893, says: "The present panic is undeniably a banker's panic. So also was the panic of 1873, and the immeasurable suffering which the first produced and this last is leading to, will write a fearful record against them. Are we not right then in saying:

The bankers and brokers by breed
 Are gold bugs, and governed by greed;
 They haughtily fasten and feed
 On the sweat and the blood of the workers—
 As shirkers, they fasten and feed
 On the sweat and the blood of the workers.

They crawled through Congressional halls,
 When war* thundered hard at the walls,
 And while we were facing the balls
 They enacted new laws for the shirkers—
 The workers, while stopping the balls,
 Were enslaved by a scheme of the shirkers.

We pay for a credit our own,
 On debts and our labor they loan;
 So gold has extended its throne,
 'Till we owe it about thirty billions!
 Curse on you, ye usurers bold,
 Corrupted with blood is your gold.

You ride in your pride with the high,
 Upheld by the toilers who sigh;
 And weak ones competing must die,
 Trampled down by the classes who plunder—
 You heed not the millions who cry,
 And you trample on all who are under.

TARIFF ON THE BRAIN

(Tune: William Brennan)

Come all you honest people,
 Whoever you may be,
 And help the honest workingmen
 Resist monopoly.
 'Tis headed by the brokers;
 They deal in bonds and stocks;
 They cite us to the tariff
 While they're getting in their knocks.

Chorus:

Tariff on the brain! Tariff on the brain!
 Look out for politicians
 Who have tariff on the brain.

The goldbugs knowing Grover
 To their scheming would agree,
 They put him in the White House
 Their agent there to be.

* Spanish-American War

They robbed us of our silver
 And grabbed up all our gold—
 They cite us to the tariff,
 And leave us in the cold.

They've a scheme to throttle labor
 And monopolize the land,
 To make of us a servile herd,
 While they are rich and grand
 Their schemes cause want and hunger,
 And they may get foiled perhaps;
 Or will our fair Columbia
 By their greediness collapse?

TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP

In the sainted Lincoln's chair
 Beats a heart which knows no care*
 For the lot of those who toil in its domain,
 For the many millions poor,
 Seeking work from door to door
 That they may the honest needs of life obtain.

Chorus:

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the tramps are tramping
 Seeking an opportunity
 By their labor to create
 Wealth for all within the state,
 And retain enough to keep themselves alive.

Is there then no work to do
 None who needs a garment new?
 Is the work of all the nation wholly done?
 Are there no more homes to build,
 No more granaries to be filled,
 Not a want to be supplied for any one?

May the weary blistered feet,
 Tramping up and down the street,
 Like a curse within the ears forever sound
 (But of the robbers who have planned
 Death and ruin of our land,
 And where the right to live and labor once was found.

THE PATCHES ON MY PANTS

(Tune: Auld Lang Syne)

Of all the years since I began
 To mix in politics,

* Reference is to President Benjamin Harrison, who was serving his second term.

The one that tries my inner man
 Is Eighteen Ninety Six;
 And as this aching void I feel,
 I cast a wistful glance,
 And count them all from hip to heel,
 The patches on my pants.

My mind runs back to '88
 When first I tried them on,
 I walked with proud and joyous gait
 To vote for Harrison;
 Had I prophetic eyes to see
 They'd swim with tears perchance,
 To find that vote brought out on me
 Those patches on my pants.

THE GOLD BUG

By J. A. Edgerton

(Tune: The "Bowery")

There once was a man who lived in New York,
 Constructed somewhat in the fashion of pork;
 He was not very long, but was awfully fat,
 There was nothing about him was small--but his hat.
 He possessed the features that mark a tough;
 Was mostly composed of beef, belly, and bluff;
 He didn't look brilliant, but seemed well-fed;
 And these were the words that he said:

I'm a gold bug, a gold bug;
 My name is Grover
 And that I'm all over
 A gold bug, a gold bug,
 You can tell from the size of my head.

He was pachydermatous-thick of hide;
 For his country (by substitute) fled and died.
 He rose to be sheriff and hung two men,
 (But didn't require any substitute then);
 Became a mayor by howling reform;
 And when, by the same means, he chanced to warm
 A governor's chair and a president's next,
 He suddenly took a new text;

I'm a gold bug, a gold bug;
 Free silver ain't in it,
 Because I'm agin it;
 A gold bug, I'm a gold bug;
 By this cry the country was vexed.

He vetoed pensions by the job lot;
 He talked about tariff and similar rot;

He tried to hand over the rebel flags;
 Went hunting and fishing and got on jags;
 He snorted and raved o'er the Gorman bill;
 Got muddled with Gresham and stuck on Lil;
 On congress his patronage used as a string;
 And still he continued to sing;

I'm a gold bug, a gold bug,
 Wall Street has bought me,
 And so has got me,
 A gold bug, a gold bug,
 And a mighty good figure I bring.

When first he was running, he made the bluff;
 "One term for president is enough;"
 But see, how poorly he keeps his word;
 He now is fishing around for a third.
 He writes long letters and talks through his hat,
 But, old "stuffed prophet," we know where you're at;
 You are not in it, you're on the wrong side,
 And the people will soon let you slide.

You're a gold bug, a gold bug;
 And so, dear Grover,
 We'll throw you over;
 For a gold bug, a gold bug,
 Is something we cannot abide.

NEBRASKA FOLKLORE PAMPHLET Number nineteen will be issued in January and will contain NEBRASKA CREEK NAMES.

FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT

NEBRASKA

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