



THE KEYNOTER



Special Three-Dimensional Items Issue

The Willkie Shed • A Bryan Tombstone • The Taft Bloomers

The Origin of "O.K." • The Theocratic Party

Editor's Message

Over the years, *The Keynoter* has published illustrations and stories about numerous rare and unknown political items but I believe this issue breaks new ground with Barry Popik's linguistic study of the origins of the term "O.K." Popik is an enthusiastic researcher known for the definitive explanation of why New York City is called "The Big Apple" and a variety of other linguistic studies. In this issue he pushes past the general knowledge that "O.K." first referred to Martin Van Buren ("Old Kinderhook") into its earliest known published roots.

Language was also the source of a bit of concern in the article about the Taft and Bryan bloomers. The use of a somewhat rude term – even if it is in the form of a quote from a museum curator – did make me hesitate. Yet I felt that historical accuracy is an essential virtue that takes priority over social nicety. History should include all pertinent details. Besides, it's a great story.

This issue also continues the feature for the newer collector, following up on the "What Does It Mean?" series began by Harvey Goldberg in the Winter 1995 issue. This time we look at Adlai Stevenson's shoe (plus a follow-up on Harvey's Teapot Dome story). Stephen Hauser's in-depth look at the Theocratic Party and its most active presidential candidate, Bill Rogers, should please the minor party specialists but – more than anything else – I suspect all collectors will especially enjoy the many unusual three-dimensional items featured throughout the issue.



Michael Kelly
Editor

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APIC seeks to encourage and support the study and preservation of original materials issuing from and relating to political campaigns of the United States of America and to bring its members fuller appreciation and deeper understanding of the candidates and issues that form our political heritage.

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THE APIC KEYNOTER

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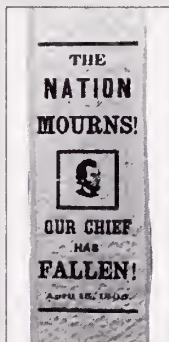
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Illustrations: The editor wishes to thank the following for providing illustrations for this issue: Al Anderson, James Bernard, Stephen Cresswell, Lon Ellis, Roger Fischer, William Gallagher, Theodore Hake, Chick Harris, Chris Hearn, John Koster, James Milgram, Julius Rather, Edmund Sullivan and Stewart Witham. Special thanks to *LIFE Magazine*, *The Flint Journal*, *The Louisville Courier-Journal* and *The Elizabethtown News-Enterprise*.

Covers: Front: Red, white and blue jacket from the 1888 campaign of Benjamin Harrison and Levi P. Morton. **Back:** News photograph taken in Flint, Michigan by William Gallagher of *The Flint Journal*.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE



“The Nation Mourns,” a look at the wealth of material inspired by popular sadness at the death of a president. Other topics of interest include one collector’s search for the story behind some rare Socialist pins and a new book by Roger Fischer on political cartoons.

The Willkie Shed: One of a Kind

By James C. Bernard

There was excitement galore in Elwood, Indiana, that summer of 1940. Their favorite son, Wendell Willkie, had won the nomination for President. He was returning to his birthplace to give his acceptance speech on August 17, 1940.

Everyone in this small town had the same thing on their minds: this was an opportunity to make some cash. The misery of The Great Depression and its lessons were not to be forgotten that quickly.

Everyone was planning to have a vending space for food, parking, souvenirs, anything to make a dollar on the Big Day. The rush was on!

There were several small metal stamping plants in town. All decided to have a go at making license plate attachments for autos. They would make plates for both parties, Democrat and Republican, but especially for Willkie. In all, at least 14 different attachments were produced for the 1940 campaign in Elwood.

The first plate on the streets was Monticello's "Hope Of Our Country" with a red star in the center. The rise of Communism and the Red Star of Russia was discussed in the daily papers as much as the upcoming election. Some

very disparaging local comments were heard about the red star on the plate and its meaning.

Realizing the error, the manufacturer decided the wise course for him was to recall all the offensive plates. He assigned them to the scrap heap and produced a new "Hope Of Our Country" plate. This time a bold white star shone where the offending red star had been.

Some enterprising employee (or maybe the scrap man) saw a thing of value in the discards. Gathering all of them together, he took them home. You used everything in those times.

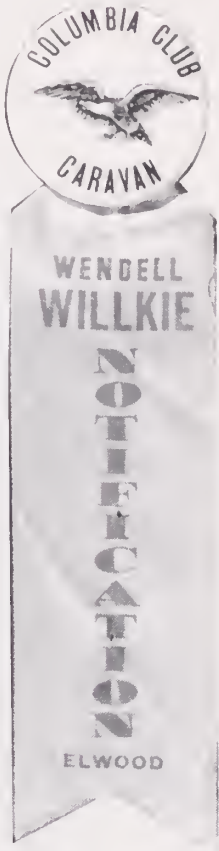
He had a little barn on the back of his lot. It needed repair. Using hundreds of the scrapped plates, turned upside down, back side out, he nailed them to all four sides of the barn, like roofing. Completely covering it, top to bottom.

The little barn still stands today, still serving a useful purpose. It sheds a plate now and then, unnoticed, unrecognized for what it is.

A mute and decaying monument of Elwood and her most famous son's grandest moment.★

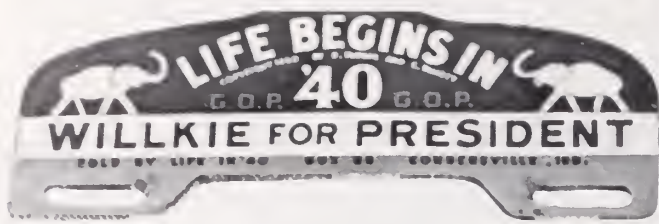


The drinking glass (left) featuring Wendell Willkie was produced for the Elwood, Indiana celebration. The picture on the right, which appeared in LIFE Magazine, shows the staff of Elwood's Monticello Manufacturing Co. hard at work making the red star version of the Willkie license plates.



Above is the "Willkie Shed," covered with the Willkie license plates made with the red star. Below is an example of the later version, produced with a white star to avoid any Communist symbolism. Several small manufacturing companies in Elwood, Indiana produced license plates for both sides during the 1940 campaign. At least 14 different varieties are known to have come out of Elwood. The ribbon at the upper left is from Elwood's Willkie Day.





Willkie license plate



The small town of Elwood was the center of the political universe for at least one day. These photographs from LIFE Magazine capture the excitement of that day. Could any of those lamp post pictures of Willkie still exist in someone's attic?





The Taft Bloomers

By Michael Kelly



"Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in our society."

-Mark Twain

Our presidential elections often produce amazing and absurd ways of carrying the candidate's message. From Adams sewing boxes to McKinley soap babies to Reagan frisbees, the candidate's name and picture have adorned almost any item people use. Since the days of the George Washington brass clothing buttons, clothes have often been used to promote candidates. Canes and hats were among the earliest items boosting a political favorite. Today political tee-shirts are everywhere, not to mention sweatshirts, baseball caps, jackets and a rich variety of bizarre hats, certain to attract TV cameras at any political convention.

However, APIC member Stewart Witham (APIC #5192) discovered a set of items which might be a new high (or low) in political Americana: a matched set of small silk "britches." Today we'd call them bloomers but "britches" is a term used at the turn of the century for ladies' undergarments when such things were still considered rather racy. The decorations on these particular garments suggest that they may indeed have had a somewhat racy use during the 1908 campaign between William Howard Taft and William Jennings Bryan.

The two items are owned by the historical museum in Massillon, Ohio, a small city not far from McKinley's

hometown of Canton. The Bryan version is described by the museum as "split-crotch pantaloons" and features a picture of Bryan on the left leg and a picture of his running mate, John Kern, on the right leg. The waistband carries the message "Free Trade."

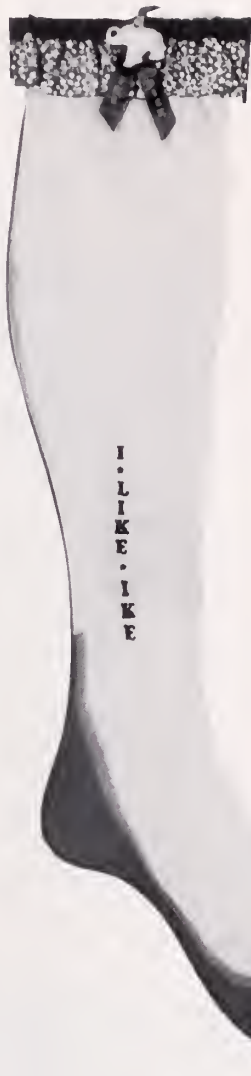
By contrast, the William Taft-John Sherman version is described as "closed crotch" and features on its waistband the motto "Protection." Both versions have red, white and blue stripes at the bottom of each leg.

One can only imagine their purpose. Were they worn by the loyal Democratic and Republican ladies of Ohio? Were they possibly designed for entertainment purposes at a political "smoker" or stag party. Imagine a naughty dancer lifting her skirt to reveal Taft and "Protection" only to be topped by her colleague revealing her bloomers boosting Bryan and "Free Trade."

The two items were donated to the museum in 1962 by a Massillon attorney named Chalmer Heggern. Witham reports that "his source and the manufacturer is unknown." Whether these are items to be classified with the genteel 1952 Ike and Adlai silk stockings or with the raunchy 1960 "Prostitutes Vote For Nixon or Kennedy - We Don't Care Who Gets In!" button, will be left to the reader to decide.★



In 1992, Clinton-Gore loyalists could wear these "Democratic Knock-Out!" boxer shorts.



An updated version of the Taft bloomers might be these Ike and Adlai silk stockings. Of course, a polite gentleman would always tip his hat to a lady, revealing his political loyalties, as in this Grover Cleveland-Adlai Stevenson jugate top hat. Below is a matched set of McKinley and Bryan glasses.



One Very Loyal Democrat: A Bryan Tombstone

By Michael Kelly

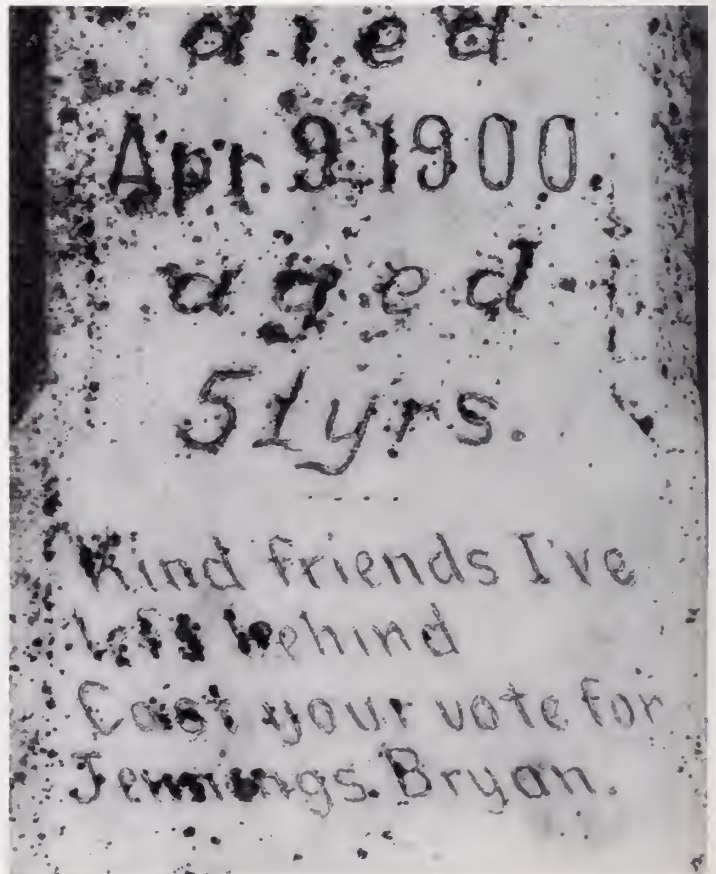


There have long been citizens loyal to the Democratic Party. In the days of the one-party South, party faithful proudly proclaimed themselves to be "Yellow Dog Democrats." A "Yellow Dog Democrat" was someone who would "vote for a yellow dog, so long as he was running on the Democratic ticket!"

But even the most committed Democrat must take off his hat to B.H. Norris. The late Mr. Norris showed that death itself could not diminish his support for William Jennings Bryan. When B.H. Norris died on April 9, 1900 at the age of 51, his disappointment at not having survived long enough to vote in the November election must have been intense. He left instructions for the following inscription to be carved on his tombstone:

"Kind friends I've left behind,
Cast your vote for Jennings Bryan."

Now that's a loyal Democrat!★



Political Lightbulb Shines

By Steven J. Paul

(Reprinted from the Elizabethtown News-Enterprise)

Nestled in a metal index card holder, carefully wrapped in white foam padding, is a clear light bulb. It's smaller than most bulbs but its unique quality comes from its partisan filament. When in use, a small elephant and the letters "GOP" inside the bulb glow a fluorescent orange.

"Everybody that I've ever talked to said it was really important," said 60-year-old Gladys Newton of Elizabethtown, who owns the antique bulb. Mrs. Newton's son found the light bulb in his old house in Indianapolis and gave it to her during a visit about 12 years ago. He discovered the political memento wrapped in paper while renovating his basement. "My family is all hot-headed Democrats," Mrs. Newton said, laughing. "He said, 'Mom, you're the only stupid one that would keep an old Republican bulb.'" She also is a Democrat, but "I've got the bulb anyway."

When she and her husband, Jim, returned home, they inserted the light bulb in a lamp and discovered it still worked. They noticed the light bulb has a brass base and determined it must be an old political item. That's when they tucked the bulb in a safe-deposit box at their bank and began trying to learn more about its history and value. Early efforts were unsuccessful. Unlike those made now, the bulb does not have the name of a manufacturer on it.

Mrs. Newton recently learned that the light bulb was made in the late 1920s or early 1930s as a gimmick. "They made them for the Republicans and for the Democrats," said Robert Fratkin of Washington, D.C., past president of American Political Items Collectors. "People had more of a sense of party identification than they do today. Essentially, they're a gimmick. The bulb sold in stores for about 29 cents."

He and Julius Rather, a Lexington attorney and APIC member, said items associated with candidates, such as buttons and ribbons, are worth more than mementos made for a political party. "It's a novelty item," Rather said. Still, Fratkin said many people don't realize they have valuable political items stashed away in their homes. "There is a lot of money in people's attics," he said.

APIC provides free appraisal of old political items and will try to find someone interested in purchasing them, Fratkin said.

"These are artifacts of American history people may be sitting on," he said, adding that selling the items to a collector helps preserve the items.

After learning the history and value of the GOP light bulb, Mrs. Newton said she would sell it "if the price is right."

Because she is a Democrat, Mrs. Newton isn't compelled to keep the bulb. Still, that attitude would be similar if she had a Democratic memento.

"I don't vote the ticket," Mrs. Newton said. "But, I shouldn't say that; my poor daddy would turn over if he heard me say that. I was raised a Democrat all my life. I vote the person, not the politics."★



Maker of Political Cigarettes Closes

By Greg Otolski

(Reprinted from the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 1, 1993)

World Tabac Ltd., which closed yesterday, barely registered as a blip in the history of the U.S. tobacco industry. But the Louisville company has an interesting place in the history of U.S. political memorabilia.

After 57 years the tobacco-blending company shut down production at its 12th Street plant, putting 30 people out of work.

Robert Wrege, 77, whose father founded the company in 1936 as the Tobacco Blending Corp., said the plant recently lost its only major contract – supplying 500,000 pounds of blended tobacco to a cigar company in Tampa, Fla.

“They decided to blend their own tobacco, and that left us without any work,” Wrege said. “It’s sad to see the business go, but we had a nice run while it lasted.”

Tobacco Blending Corp. was bought by Wally Frank Ltd. of New York in 1963, and the name was changed to World Tabac. Wrege stayed on as plant manager and remained active in the daily operations of the company until a few years ago.



It was always a small company, at its peak employing only 60 people. Over the years, the plant produced specialty pipe-tobacco mixtures, cigar-tobacco filler, chewing tobacco and cigarettes.

It's some of those cigarettes that may keep World Tabac and Tobacco Blending Corp. from completely fading from memory.

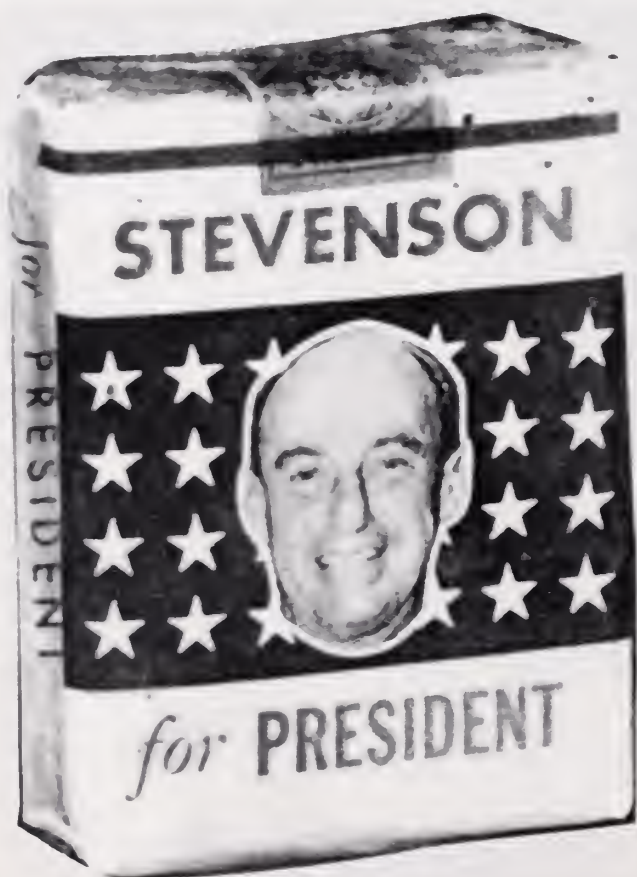
During the 1952 presidential campaign Tobacco Blending Corp. manufactured packs of cigarettes bearing the faces of the candidates, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. In addition to Eisenhower and Stevenson's portraits, one pack had "I Like Ike" printed on it and the other had "Stevenson for President."

The packs can be found in the Smithsonian Institution's political memorabilia collection in Washington, D.C. The Filson Club in Louisville also has the packs in its collection, as does the Tobacco History Corp., a non-profit museum in Durham, N.C.

"We came up with the idea on our own and produced them ourselves," Wrege said. "They were popular cigarettes, and you know what? The Eisenhower cigarette out-sold the Stevenson. The number of packs we sold was a better indication of how the election would turn out than the polls."

William Axton, a retired University of Louisville English professor and tobacco-history buff, said World Tabac was one of the last of the small independent tobacco companies in the area.

"They were one of the relics from the days when Louisville was a great tobacco market city and was known for producing all kinds of specialty tobacco products," Axton said. "It's a part of our local history that has died away."★



The 1952 Popcorn Poll

By Michael Kelly

In 1952, a novel polling device called the “Popcorn Poll” was given wide publicity. An enterprising promoter offered several theater chains popcorn boxes with caricatures of Republican Dwight (“Ike”) Eisenhower and Democrat Adlai Stevenson. Movie-goers could demonstrate their preference in that year’s presidential race by choosing their popcorn in an Ike or Adlai box. Although

The Keynoter doesn’t have access to the final results of the Popcorn Poll, there is a clue that would indicate that this polling device accurately predicted the results in November. When a small supply of leftover boxes was discovered, there were only two or three Eisenhower boxes to be found compared to ten or fifteen Stevenson boxes.★



The 1952 Popcorn Poll featured your choice of popcorn boxes backing either Eisenhower or Stevenson

FOR THE NEWER COLLECTOR

Stevenson's Famous Shoe

By Richard S. West

A shoe with a hole in it. Certainly this must be one of the unlikeliest of symbols for a party to adopt for political purposes, but nevertheless, in 1952, it became the unofficial emblem of the Stevenson for President campaign.

In early September, with weeks of grueling campaigning to go, an already weathered Stevenson arrived to deliver a speech in Flint, Michigan. As he sat on the platform next to Governor G. Mennen Williams, making last minute corrections to his notes, photographer William Gallagher of the Flint *Journal* caught the candidate off-guard. Stevenson, with legs crossed, was revealing a good-sized hole in his shoe. The photo appeared all over the country the next day and caused a great deal of amusement. Democrats looked kindly upon their candidate, whom others charged with being aloof, and said that this was symbolic of his human qualities. Stevenson was amused. He wore less worn shoes for the rest of the campaign but was confronted more than once by tongue-in-cheek supporters who presented him with pairs of shoes as gifts.

Soon after the incident a small one inch long shoe tie tac was issued, in pewter and silver, by the Democratic Committee with the image of a hole in sole similar to that in the photograph. It became the unofficial Democratic symbol and was used particularly for fundraising. The Republicans also used the shoe, picturing it on buttons with the legend, "Don't Let This Happen To You - Vote For Ike."

It was a lighter side to the 1952 campaign and really had little political impact. Gallagher, the photographer who snapped the famous photo, benefited the most. The picture won him the 1952 Pulitzer Prize.★



A curious aspect of the Stevenson show is the fact that the photo of Adlai Stevenson with the hole in his shoe was taken at a rally in 1952 but most of the items using the shoe image are from 1956.



Democrats found Stevenson's shoe an endearing symbol of his humanity. Republicans found it amusing.



"The Pin Adlai Wears"

VOLUNTEERS FOR STEVENSON STEVENSON SHOE PIN DIVISION

DISTRIBUTION CENTER
311 S VERMONT AVE • DUNKIRK 9-2867 • LOS-ANGELES 5, CALIFORNIA



October 1, 1956

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We had originally planned to write each of you a letter to thank you for your contribution to the national Stevenson-Kefauver TV fund -- but you have responded in numbers so far exceeding our fondest hopes that we have had to let the silver shoe pins, which we have sent you, serve as our thanks, without individual letters. We know you will be pleased that our silence was caused by such good reason.

We think you will be glad to know that you are part of an army now "walking with Stevenson" more than 100,000 strong and growing by some 10,000 every day. These figures represent only those people who have asked for silver shoe pins -- add to them the countless numbers yet to pour in and you know that our army is vast and powerful enough to win on November 6.

Sitting, as we are, at the very nerve center of this operation, we wish we could introduce you all to each other, share your various letters and comments with everybody. Such, alas, is impossible. But we can briefly describe you to you. You range from an isolated Republican farmer in Kansas who wants to do his bit and contribute a dollar, and a dedicated octogenarian in a rest home in Missouri who is wearing the pin on her bed-jacket day and night, to spokesmen for highly organized groups in metropolitan areas who send us Western Union money orders, saying, "The demand is enormous -- please send by air mail 3,000 pins," and to the president of Harvard University Students for Stevenson, who wrote, "Thank you for your prompt shipment of 200 pins. The shoe pin is a great success here, for it only took one hour to sell out...You may expect a daily order from us."

As indicated above, your requests have come in by one's and by thousands. Some of you have contributed a dollar and received one pin; some have contributed \$3200 and received 4,000 pins, of \$8.00 and received 10 pins. This apparent double standard occurs because of what we can and cannot afford to do. We can afford to give ten pins in a single shipment when we receive an eight-dollar contribution. We cannot afford to give any smaller number of pins for less than a dollar contribution each.

Whether you are an individual who contributed a dollar (or more) or whether you are the spokesman for a group which contributed many dollars, we say with this letter, many thanks, and we enclose our letter of this same date to Democratic officials and Volunteers leaders -- knowing its message will be of interest to you -- along with the materials referred to in that letter. You are welcome to use those materials, too, on the same basis.

Sincerely yours,

Goldie Kennedy



A selection of pins and buttons showing Stevenson's shoe.

Teapot Dome revisited

The Winter 1996 issue of *The Keynoter* featured the story of the "Teapot Dome" scandal by Harvey Goldberg. We thought you'd like to see some additional items relating to this issue. The postcard is from the Democrats, the top button is from Robert LaFollette's Progressive Party and the lower button is from the Communist Party. Strangely enough, Teapot Dome didn't keep the Republicans from a landslide victory with Calvin Coolidge.



1995 APIC FINANCIAL REPORT

January 1, 1995 Opening Balances:

Checking Account:	\$	3,467.38
Money Market Account:		5,452.22
Convention Fund:		9,915.55
Emergency Fund:		5,305.95
	Total	\$ 24,141.10

1995 Income:

1st Class Postage	\$	4,100.00
Book Club		441.89
Donations		5.00
Family Dues		871.00
Interest		619.63
Mailing Labels		1,152.70
Mailing Supply Service		1,682.75
National Convention		944.31
Prepaid Dues		25,498.00
Regular Dues		70,793.00
Youth Dues		896.50

Total \$ 107,004.78

Total \$ 131,145.88

1995 Expenses:

APIC Binders	\$	1,975.41
Awards		846.18
Computer		998.07
Copier Maintenance Contract		299.00
Fax Machine		555.48
50th Ann. Magnifying Glasses		1,626.18
Gas Mileage		2,208.08
Insurance		2,325.00
Keynoter Editor		500.00
Mailing		2,841.52
Miscellaneous		270.48
Mailing Supply Service		328.05
National Convention Pringing		178.50
National Convention Postage		675.74
Newsletter Editor		1,405.18
Newsletter		14,063.23
Office		975.23
Office Chair:		201.67
Postage		16,683.48
President's		1,009.10
Printing		28,531.54
Secretary's Compensation		16,325.00
Storage		1,380.00
Telephone		1,650.58

Total \$ 97,845.62

December 31, 1995 Closing Balances:

Checking:	\$	20,386.32
Money Market:		641.34
Convention Fund:		8,662.53
Emergency Fund:		3,610.07

Total \$ 33,300.26

Total \$ 131,145.88

1995 APIC GROWTH FUND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

January 1, 1995 Opening Balance:

\$ 1651.32

1995 Income

Donations	\$	1,813.80
Interest		36.31

Total \$ 1,850.11

\$ 1,850.11

\$ 3,501.43

1995 Expenses:

Executive Dir Compensation:	\$	950.00
Miscellaneous:		2.00
Office Supplies:		42.70
Photocopying:		3.40
Postage:		774.62
Telephone:		63.00

Total \$ 1,835.72

\$ 1,835.72

December 31, 1995 Closing Balance:

\$ 1,665.71

\$ 3,501.43



The Story of O.K.

By Barry Popik

"O.K."—a catchword in that famous 1840 log cabin and hard cider, Tippecanoe and Tyler Too presidential campaign—will be spoken today 2.5 billion times. The park service in Martin Van Buren's Lindenwald home in Kinderhook, N.Y. told me that the average American will say "O.K." seven times every day (1.5 billion times, total), and it will be spoken another billion times every day in countries outside the U.S.

This computer program won't even print this story unless I first click "O.K." O.K. translates as O.K. everywhere—not "si," not "oui," but always "O.K." A check of the Manhattan phone directory shows an O.K. Cleaners, O.K. Cutting, O.K. Deli, O.K. Fish Market, O.K. Food & Vegetable Store, O.K. Fruit & Vegetable Store, O.K. Harris Gallery (My friend once had an exhibit at this gallery; the owner wanted an "American-sounding" name), O.K. Jeweler, O.K. Laundromat, O.K. Originals, O.K. Refrigeration Service, O.K. Restaurant Supply Equipment, O.K. Shoe Repair, O.K. Trading Co., O.K. Uniform, and O.K. Wang Custom Tailor. A Chinese restaurant opposite the Javits federal building declares "Everything O.K."

Probably the most famous shootout in the American West occurred at the O.K. Corral. "O.J." comes first only in the alphabet. "C.K.," the logo for Calvin Klein, can't come close.

Three years ago, at a meeting of the American Name Society, I met the legendary scholar Allen Walker Read. Read's six-essay series in *American Speech* on "O.K." (now thirty years old) represents a landmark in scholarly research on this greatest of Americanisms. To summarize: Read discovered that "O.K." was born out of an initialization craze that started in Boston in 1838. The first "O.K." was found written by Charles Gordon Greene, editor of the *Boston Post*, in his newspaper of March 23, 1839 ("o.k.—all correct"). The earliest references all state that it means all correct—misspelled as oll korrekt. In the 1840 Presidential campaign, Martin Van Buren (taking a cue from Henry Clay, who was Old Kentuck) went by the moniker Old Kinderhook. A group of his supporters called themselves the O.K.s. The rest is history.

Read successfully debunked the many outrageous theories that have surrounded O.K. etymologies. It had nothing to do with Andrew Jackson's poor spelling. Jackson



A HARD ROAD TO HOE!

This political cartoon showing VanBuren and Jackson is an early example of the use of "O.K."

used O.R. (order recorded). This Jackson myth was used by his enemies and still is mentioned in reference books today, despite a complete lack of evidence. O.K. has no Native American language source (President Woodrow Wilson believed this theory and spelled it “okeh”). O.K. was not the popular abbreviation for Old Keokuk, chief of the Sauk and Fox Indians. O.K. has no African American source. O.K. did not come from Aux Cayes in Haiti. O.K. did not come from a railway freight agent named Obediah Kelly. O.K. did not come from the writings of John Jacob Astor. O.K. did not come from Orrins-Kendall crackers, which were produced during the civil war. O.K. did not come from the Greek “olla kalla” (all good), nor the Latin equivalent “omnia korrekta,” nor the German “Oberst Kommandant” (colonel commanding) nor “Ober Kommando” (high command), nor the French “O qu-oui” (Oh, yes!) nor “aux quais” (to the wharves—supposedly used by French sailors), nor the Finnish “oikea” (correct), nor the Scotch “och aye” (oh, yes).

Read proved this in great detail and few, if any, have challenged this or added to it in the thirty years since its publication. Yet, there was still work to be done. Read did not comprehensively catalogue the many O.K. items, from ribbons to broadsides—he mostly researched old newspapers. And, as it turns out, he missed a few important things there, too. He did not find the O.K. Rosetta Stone—a believable source stating “O.K. is mine. Here’s what it means.”

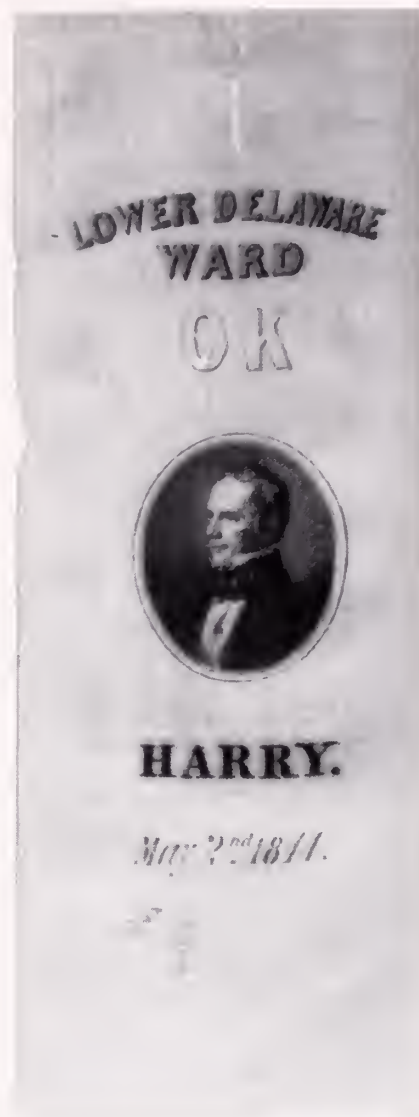
Unfortunately, I didn’t find the O.K. Rosetta Stone, either. However, my work did confirm his original findings: O.K. started in Boston and was invented by Charles Gordon Greene of the *Boston Morning Post* as a humorous abbreviation of all correct, or oll korrekt.

The abbreviation craze actually started some years before 1838. In 1835 in the *New York Evening Star*, I found “Kitchen Cabinet” frequently abbreviated as “K.C.” Henry Clay was then called Old Kaintuck, but I failed to find any “O.K.” abbreviation. A popular London correspondent of the time was O.P.Q.

Then, in the summer of 1838, Greene invented “O.F.M.” for “Our First Men” and “O.L.C.” for “Our Leading Citizens.” (Read missed O.L.C.) In this period of American history, there was no Associated Press or Reuters news services. Newspapers exchanged with each other. Then, they would talk to each other through various quips, much like a conversation on an internet bulletin board. We can be sure that Greene invented O.F.M. in the summer of 1838 because several other newspapers commented to him on the term.

Other abbreviations followed. G.T.T. was Gone To Texas (a euphemism for bankrupts escaping their debts in the new territory). S.P. was small potatoes. The B.Y.M.S.F.M.T.C.O.T.I. was the Boston Young Men’s Society For Meliorating The Condition Of The Indians. Drinks were abbreviated: G.C. for Gin Cocktail, P.W.S. for Port Wine Sangaree, M.J. for Mint Julep, W.B. for Wine Bitters, I.B.P. for Iced Brandy Punch, B.C. for Brandy Cobbler, among others.

A forerunner to O.K. was O.W.—all right (oll wright). Thus, on June 18, 1838 in the *Boston Morning Post* we see



Despite its origin with Democrat Martin Van Buren, supporters of Whig Henry Clay made frequent use of “O.K.” See the related article on page 23.

“It was O.W.—(all right).” On February 7, 1839, we see “However, we suppose it is O.W. (all right).” Read missed a third O.W. in the *Boston Post*, for on July 30, 1838, we find “Why don’t they try a bowl [of turtle] and certify that it is O.W.—all right.”

Read also missed crucial evidence in New York’s *Spirit of the Times*. The “To Correspondents” section in the upper left hand corner of page one is easy to gloss over. On June 22, 1839, it reads: “O.W. all right.” A year later, on June 27, 1840, about a meeting of Greene’s Mammoth Cod Association, the *Spirit of the Times* addresses Greene and states “If it is O.K. some people we wot of will be thar!”

Why did O.W. disappear? Well, “oll wright” doesn’t change the “r” in the second word. Also, O.W. is harder to pronounce than O.K. Most likely, however, there was an objection from an O.F.M. named Oliver Wendell Holmes—frequently abbreviated O.W. Holmes.

So, on March 23, 1839, we see “o.k.—all correct.” On March 26, 1839, we see “They were o.k.” On April 10, 1839, we see “O.K.—all correct.” On October 11, 1839, the



This Van Buren medallion (shown enlarged) pictures "O.K." protecting the nation's money. The "O.K." slogan was so popular that 1840 Whig candidate William Henry Harrison used it too, as seen in the hand painted banner above and the ribbon below.

Boston Evening Transcript states "It is O.K. (all correct) in this quarter." On September 2, 1839, *The New York Evening Tattler* wrote "OK! all correct!" Many papers in mid-November of 1839 ran a squib on the initial language and called it "Wall Street phraseology." A glossary was given, with "O.K., all correct." *The New York American*—located on Wall Street—humbugged the idea that it was their language.

Clearly, "O.K." means "all correct"—Read found five such definitions in 1839. He missed two more that I found, and both are very important. In the April 15, 1839 *Baltimore Sun*: "The gentleman who sent us a couple of 'long necked Frenchman' will be proud to know that we thought of their delicate healths in a bumper, and pronounced the 'grape brand' to be O.K.—all correct." This is the fourth O.K., coming about three weeks after the first. Again, it means "all correct." *The Baltimore Sun* exchanged papers with the *Boston Post*, but this is our first non-Post usage. Interestingly, it involves wine.

In the December 12, 1839 *New York New Era*: "The Feds in the Third Ward have held a meeting to approve of the nomination of Harrison. Of course, this in the Butt Ender's phrase [the Butt Enders were a political group, taking their name from the end of a rifle] is O.K., that is, 'oll korrekt.'"

This is crucial, for the March 23, 1840 *New Era* would announce a meeting of the Democratic O.K. Club. The March 27, 1840 *New Era* stated: "Meeting To Night, O.K." At a Masonic Hall meeting that night in New York City, it would be written that "The war cry of the loco focos was O.K., the two letters paraded at the head of an inflammatory article in the *New Era* of the morning. 'Down with the whigs, boys, O.K.' was the shout of these poor, deluded men. Such were the fearful beginnings of the French Revolution."

The *New York American* of March 28, 1840 wrote "This band of the 'Old Butt-Enders,' reorganized under the new cognomen of the O.K. club..." Another paper stated



that "The word, O.K., was passed from mouth to mouth, a cheer was given, and they rushed into the Hall and up stairs, like a torrent." O.K. would later be interpreted as "Old Kinderhook" after Martin Van Buren's birthplace, but we now know from the December 12th New Era article that it was stolen from Charles Gordon Greene's "oll korrekt." The April 15, 1840 *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* would even state that "the tail of the Democratic party, the roarsers, buttenders, ringtails, O.K.s (flat burglary this latter title)...."

The O.K. jokes didn't stop: Out of Kash. Out of Kredit. Out of Karacter. Out of Klothes. Oll Kapsized. Off for Kuba. Out of Kole. Orful Katastrophe. Orrid Kalamity. Oll Kompelled. Oll for Kent. Oll Komplete. Oll Komfirmmed. Old Kornmeal. Oll Korned. Oddly Kalkulated. Old Kumberland. Old Konnecticut.

The May 9, 1840 *Boston Daily Times* longed "for the good old sense in which they were first used—namely, to signify Oll Korrekt." Also at that time, the *Boston Daily Times* would address Colonel Charles Gordon Greene and the *Boston Morning Post* with "O.K." On May 1, 1840, the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* stated "E & O E is a good phrase, Colonel."

No, the O.K. Rosetta Stone was not found, but the evidence for Charles Gordon Greene's authorship and the



"O.K. was still popular when Democrat James K. Polk fought against Henry Clay in 1844.

"oll korrekt" definition is overwhelming. On November 4, 1842, the *Boston Post* would state that "The Faculty of Wittenberg have recently conferred the degree of O.K. on Richard Digby, Esq., of Boston, North America." In Digby, Greene created a fictional character to pawn off his awful puns (e.g., fan-you-ill hall). He never stated this, either, but there's no Richard Digby in the census records, and other newspapers put in quotes that "Digby" was visiting their cities.

"O.K.," stated the November 16, 1840 *New York Planet*. "We would suggest to our brethren of the press whether we are not injuring the cause of correct orthography and pure English, by adopting to so great an extent, the cabal-

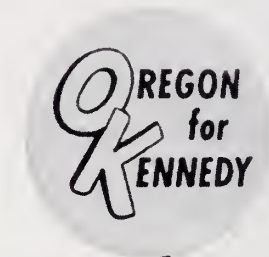
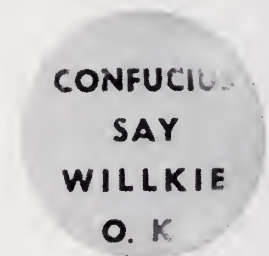
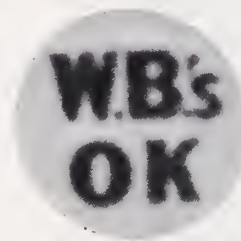
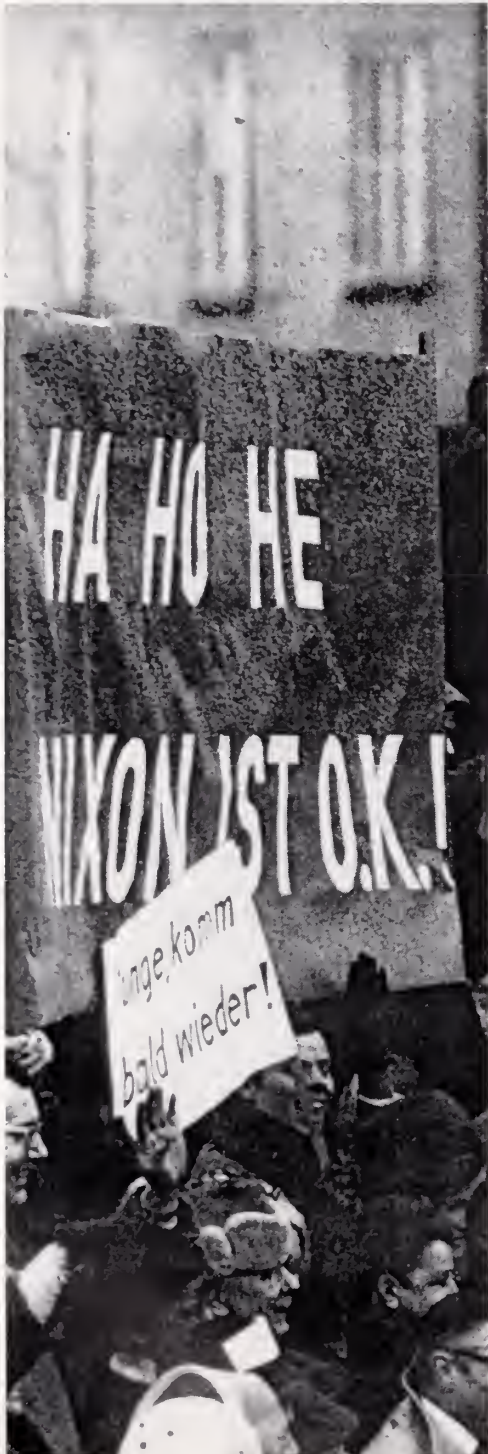
istic letters quoted above. We do not open a paper that does not present them in some new shape, and as standing for a piece of orthography each more villainous than the last. The humor of the thing is gone, and as emblems of election, they should be among things that have been."

"O.K.," of course, would not die. Old Kentuck Henry Clay (Oll for Klay) would re-use the letters in 1844. Like Van Buren in 1840, he, too, lost the election. The telegraph would soon be widely used, and "O.K." became a standard phrase with it. In 1961, astronaut Alan B. Shepard, Jr.'s "Everything A-OK!" introduced it to outer space.

There have been many books on politicians and elections, but no book on "O.K." (Notwithstanding the best-selling *I'm O.K., You're O.K.*) If you go to Boston today, there is nothing to honor *Boston Post* founder Charles Gordon Greene—a seminal figure in the history of American journalism, and the creator of the greatest gift to the American language.

When you get your car from the "All Right" parking lot, think about it.

O.K.?★



Given its political roots and universal usage, "O.K." is surprisingly uncommon on modern political items. Above are buttons from William Bryan, Wendell Willkie, Ike Eisenhower and Jack Kennedy. The tiny FDR button below is also shown enlarged. The news photo on the left from Richard Nixon's 1969 visit to Berlin shows the international use of "O.K." (in German, "he" is pronounced "hay").



Henry Klay: Old Kentucky was Oll Korrekt, O.K.?

By Barry Popik



*Get out of the way, you're quite too late,
You little Red Fox of the Empire State.*

Scholar Allen Walker Read missed one news item about “O.K.” that might have greatly influenced our American language. It ran in the *New York Literary Gazette* on February 9, 1839 and was frequently quoted by other newspapers:

“The Eight K’s – The Hon. Henry Clay was denominated the eight Ks by a coterie of wags of Washington during the last session of Congress.

“He acquired this title thus: a gentleman sitting in the gallery of the Senate Chamber during an interesting debate wished to point out Mr. Clay to his friend, a foreigner, who sat beside him, without disturbing the house, and wrote upon a card for him, thus “The gentleman to the left of the Speaker, in klaret-kolored koat with krimson kollar, is Mr. Klay, member of Kongress from Kentucky.”

The suspicion here is that some newspaper ran the above item and then added “He’s O.K. – oll korrekt.” Charles Gordon Greene’s *Boston Morning Post* would use “O.K.” on March 23, 1839, about one month later.

During the 1840 presidential campaign, almost every newspaper would run “K.K.K.K.K. (Kinderhook Kandidate Kant Kome it Kwite).” Allen Walker Read quotes this in his second “O.K.” article but without the information about Henry Clay and the eight K’s, the five K’s lose their meaning.

This enthusiasm for Ks may also have influenced the naming of the Ku Klux Klan (K.K.K.) After the Civil War, noted Reconstruction-era author Albion Tourgee (author of the anti-Klan novel *A Fool’s Errand* and the essay “The Invisible Empire”) lived in Greensboro, North Carolina. In 1870, the *Greensboro Patriot* newspaper carried numerous items about the K.K.K., many of which were signed by an “O.K.”



The O.K. craze was evident in material for Henry Clay in 1836. Clay and the Whigs used the raccoon as a party symbol, contrasting with the red fox symbolizing Van Buren. Both examples of campaign letterhead carry the legend “Get out of the way, you’re quite too late, you little red fox of the Empire State.” The 1844 ribbon also uses the “O.K.” theme.



Battling the One-Party State: Multi-party Politics in Mississippi 1877-1902

Reviewed by Michael Kelly

Multi-party Politics in Mississippi: 1877-1902 by Stephen Cresswell. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi (1995).

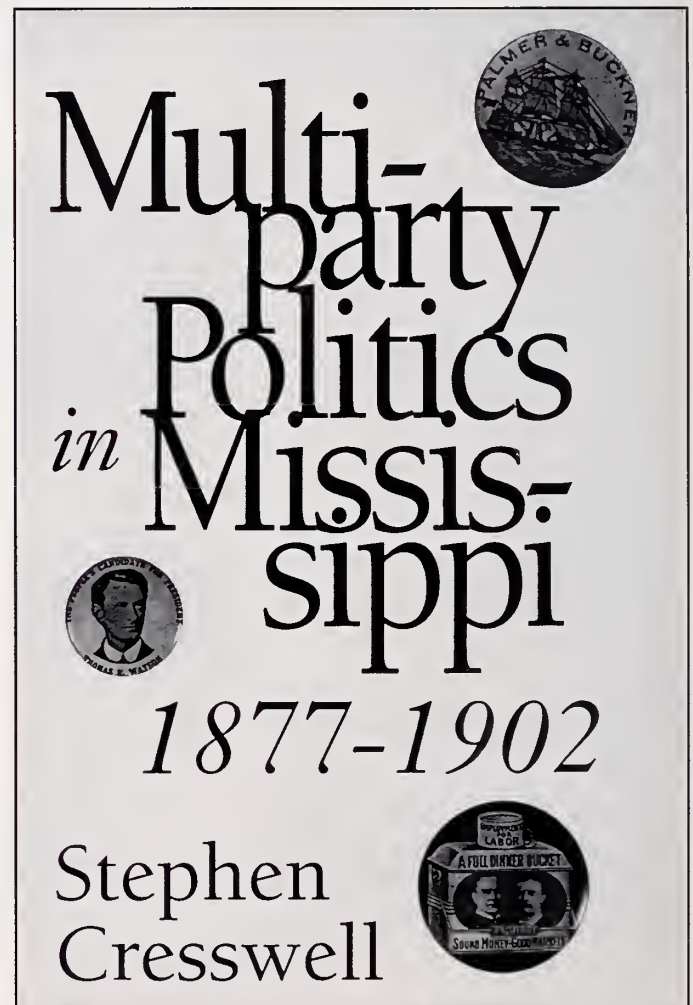
When my study of American politics advanced past the stage of reading books like *The Making of the President* and entered the more challenging and rewarding realm of academic writing, one of my first exciting discoveries was a book about Southern politics. After having read several of Eric Foner's books about the politics of the pre-Civil War era and Reconstruction, I happened upon *The Whig Party in the South* by Arthur Charles Cole. A 1912 work reprinted in 1962 by Peter Smith Publishing, the book opened my eyes to the incredible detail awaiting those who bother to look into the pages of scholarly work. What was especially fascinating was how the forces at work in the antebellum South are still found today; how counties that voted Whig in the 1800's were the first to vote Republican a century later.

So I picked up *Multi-party Politics in Mississippi 1877-1902* with keen anticipation. My expectations were not disappointed. This work by APIC member Stephen Cresswell (APIC #11768), a professor and head of the history department at West Virginia Wesleyan College, is rich in stories and explanations that breathe life into the names and images in our collection. To read how Mississippi Republicans literally risked their lives (and sometimes lost them) in order to cast a vote for Benjamin Harrison adds power and meaning to the obscure bearded man on the badges in our display cases. To learn how supporters of the Greenback Party braved intimidation and pitched gunfights just to be able to speak in public, how the Populist Party struggled for survival, how advocates of the Gold Democrats were treated by the "better elements" when they dared to challenge the established powers, offer lessons that most of us don't realize are part of the politics of our nation.

Few parts of the country have been as thoroughly dominated by a single party as was Mississippi between the end of Reconstruction and the 1960's. Aside from the lingering bitterness of the Civil War and the animosity of the white community toward the black citizens who had once been their property, Mississippi politics were marked by conflicts between farmers and merchants, battles over even the meager civic and educational expenditures

which that poor state's legislature did allocate, and a systematic denial of the vote to the poor – both black and white – most of us find hard to believe could happen in a nation which prides itself on freedom.

Yet, despite the violence and fraud, the lynchings and the missing ballot boxes, the citizens of Mississippi didn't let democracy disappear without a fight. Since the white general public came to associate the "Black Republican" party with the defeat of the Confederacy and "Negro domination," political opposition had to find other vehicles than the Republican Party. Cresswell traces how the Greenback Party, the Populist Party, the Prohibition Party and a multitude of independent and fusion efforts sought to challenge the Democrats. It is a fascinating, if somewhat depressing, story.



Cresswell fills in some of the gaps in our understanding of what the items we collect actually represent. Many collectors know that the 1896 campaign of William Jennings Bryan was marked by his having two vice presidential nominees, Democrat Arthur Sewall and Populist Thomas Watson. But what did that mean to the people of the day? It means more than the fact that Bryan-Watson jugates are rare and valuable. Cresswell explores the effect of the Populist Party endorsement of Bryan on those brave iconoclasts daring to advocate the Populist cause in the face of Mississippi's monolithic Democratic establishment. What the Democrat/Populist fusion meant in Mississippi was that the heart was torn out of the opposition, effectively eliminating political opposition until the 1960's.

Over and over, the reader is struck by the courage and faith of citizens attempting to make the electoral process work. The Republicans, increasingly limited to African Americans who were denied the right to vote, tried to defend themselves, but even when they won a majority of the votes cast, state election officers simply refused to count their votes. Next the Greenback Party emerged as the principal challenge to the establishment and later the Populist Party gave it a try. In each case, Professor Cresswell traces the individuals and forces within each movement, details their successes and failures, shows how each challenge built on its predecessors and met with the same sad results.

Story after story is told of genuine grassroots politics. The battles touch on national figures only in passing, for the real battles in politics take place among people who know each other intimately, who live in the same town and attend the same church. Cresswell traces conflict between farmers and merchants when the farmers are dependent on the merchants to extend them credit for flour and nails. He talks about politics on the county level: how the Greenback Party elected county treasurers and the Populist Party elected state senators. Cresswell describes characters like James R. Chalmers, who ran for office on the Democratic, Republican, Greenback, Independent and Free Silver tickets, eventually winning a seat in the U.S. Congress on a 1882 Greenback-Republican fusion slate.

Multi-party Politics in Mississippi 1877-1902 is a wonderful book. Cresswell's writing is easy to read and rich in drama. Of course, as an APIC-member, Cresswell uses some fine pieces from his own collection to illustrate the cover and can't resist including a passage about the 1896 campaign that states "for the first time in a presidential campaign, voters sported celluloid buttons emblazoned with the candidates' photographs; replacing the earlier campaign jewelry made of tin or bronze, political buttons were soon seen on the silk lapels of Mississippi bankers and on the cotton shirt-fronts of the state's farmers." But more representative of what true drama is to be found in this book is the following passage;

"On horseback, F.M.B. "Marsh" Cook rode to his next speaking appointment. Marsh Cook was one of a handful of white native Mississippians working to keep the state Republican Party alive. In 1888 he had run for Congress, winning one fifth of the votes cast; now, in July 1890, Cook was the only Republican outside the Delta trying for a seat in the upcoming state constitutional convention. A committee of men recently had approached him, warning that he must not make any more speeches in behalf of his candidacy. Cook replied that "he would at his next appointment speak, or die in the attempt." The Republican leader died in the attempt.

"As he approached a log schoolhouse in a lonely section of Jasper County in east-central Mississippi, five men inside thrust shotguns through the chinks and fired at Cook when he was at his closest. Cook died a lonely death; only hours later did a woman happen upon his body, riddled with shot. Cook had proudly called himself 'an uncompromising Republican.' In nearby Meridian, a newspaper labeled him 'a prominent and offensive Republican of Jasper County.' The Republican leader's 'offense' seems to have been that he warned voters that the constitutional convention was likely to limit the right to vote, and he urged Republicans (a large majority of whom were black) to organize and work against disenfranchisement. The population of Jasper County was almost perfectly balanced between blacks and whites; Democratic leaders there wanted to ensure that few blacks would be voting in the future. The ambush and murder of Marsh Cook sent a message to blacks living in the area; 1890 would mark a new era in voter participation. Precisely who would be voting in the future remained to be seen, but it was clear that most black citizens of Jasper County had already seen the inside of a polling place for the last time."

The same sad stories are to be told about Greenbackers, Populists and others. It is a story that needs to be told and Stephen Cresswell does the study of American political history a service with his telling of it.★



The 1896 race in Mississippi featured the Bryan-Sewall Democratic ticket as well as the Bryan-Watson Populist ticket. The Prohibition Party and the Gold Democrats challenged the Democrats but with little success.

Homer, Bill and the Theocratic Party

By Stephen K. Hauser



Homer A. Tomlinson, presidential nominee of the Theocratic Party, declares himself “King of the World” while holding the party flag on a visit to Jerusalem.

One of the most unusual minor party efforts in the annals of American electoral history is the Theocratic Party. They are unusual because, although they (and their forebear, the Church of God Party) fielded presidential tickets in every election between 1952 and 1968, they never managed to show up on the tote boards or in the statistical resource studies with any actual vote totals. In spite of five campaigns for the nation’s highest office, they never received any officially-recorded votes.

The story of the Theocratic Party actually begins in the nineteenth century with the story of the Church of God of Cleveland, Tennessee. In 1896, Rev. A.J. Tomlinson joined a Holiness pentecostal group that was meeting in rural Tennessee. Tomlinson soon dominated the small group, and convinced them to change their name to the Church of God, arguing that this was the one true name by which all disciples of Jesus Christ should be known. (There were, at this time, a number of other fundamentalist churches with the same idea, who also chose the label “Church of God”. These various groups were, and remain, autonomous organizations.)

Rev. Tomlinson’s group increased in size, and merged with several other pentecostal congregations. In 1908, A.J. received the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” and began speaking in tongues. This phenomenon, called glossolalia, was perceived as a sign of the Lord’s favor and of Divine anointing. Within a year, Tomlinson had been named general moderator of the Church of God. In 1914, however, his title was elevated to that of General Overseer, a position he would hold until 1922.

In an internal coup, instigated by the issues of finances and overall accountability, A.J. Tomlinson was removed as General Overseer in 1922. He was stripped of all authori-

ty in the church. As a result, he resigned his membership and subsequently organized his own new congregation, the Tomlinson Church of God. He continued to head this new church until his own death in 1943.

After A.J. died, his two sons, Milton A. Tomlinson and Homer Aubrey Tomlinson, began to fight for control of the new breakaway church that their father had founded. Homer had always claimed that A.J. had anointed him as chosen successor and Divinely-called leader of the church. For obvious reasons, Milton disagreed, and, although the two were able to share power briefly in an uneasy alliance, Milton ultimately won out, and Homer was ousted from the church. A court decision finally awarded Milton’s backers full control of the Tomlinson Church of God, and Milton had the name changed to the Church of God in Prophecy.

Homer Aubrey Tomlinson now followed in his father’s footsteps by creating yet another breakaway denomination, the Church of God, World Headquarters. By this time, his father’s original outfit was referring to itself as the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, while another group had grabbed the name Original Church of God, and yet another was calling itself the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana. By the mid-1950s, there were about a half-a-dozen other groups also claiming variations of the Church of God name. Most still exist today.

Homer Tomlinson proclaimed himself as General Overseer of the Church of God, World Headquarters. He continued in the Holiness pentecostal tradition that had marked the work of his father and brother. He followed the fundamentalist injunctions against foul language, motion pictures, make-up and jewelry, “fancy clothes”, smoking and drinking.

In one way, however, he was profoundly different. Many pentecostal and fundamentalist congregations had held themselves aloof from American politics and electioneering, believing it to be sordid and hopelessly secular. Instead, they had waited patiently for the promised second coming of Christ, which would usher in an era of peace on earth. Actually, they did not believe that there was much they could do in the meantime, except to win souls to Christ, and “watch and wait.”

Bishop Tomlinson (as he now referred to himself, in keeping with his leadership position in the new church) did not believe that Christians had to wait until Christ’s return in order to have godly, peaceful government. He believed that they themselves possessed the “keys” to the creation of the government of God on earth, if they could only be made to see it. The Kingdom of God could be



Early Theocratic Party items.

built by godly men before Christ's return, to await His coming.

The point of all this was that, through successful political activity, the church and the state could become one, and a modern theocracy would result. Nations would benefit, as did Israel of old, from rule by moral leaders, chosen by God to preside over political life. This would lead to a hybrid secular/spiritual Kingdom of God under the church, with the church under the ultimate authority of Christ. In order to start the ball rolling, a new political organization had to be formed to bring this idea to the peoples of the earth. This is exactly where Bishop Tomlinson thought that the Church of God, World Headquarters fit in.

The Bishop designed a new "national" flag for his church, and became a roving goodwill ambassador for a nation not yet born. The blue flag of the Church of God featured symbols of authority: a scepter, a star and a crown. Tomlinson's own literature later explained that they were intended to represent "the Scepter of Righteousness, the Star of Hope and the Crown of Victory."

Since the new flag was to be a truly international flag, representing a coming world government under God, Tomlinson presided over flag-planting ceremonies in literally dozens of nations over the next twenty years, beginning in the late 1940s. One nation so honored was Israel, where the Bishop proclaimed Jerusalem as "his" new capital city. Until he could rightfully claim it in power and glory, however, he was content to reside at his interim church headquarters at 9305 224th Street in Queens Village, New York. Here, he owned a two-story house where he and his family had lived since 1920. This eventually caused many people to refer to Bishop Tomlinson's branch of the Church of God as simply "Church of God, Queens Village".

After numerous flag-plantings, Tomlinson began to realize that a flag stands for nothing without a reigning sovereign. In Christ's absence, an earthly monarch was required. Never one to shirk responsibility, the Bishop offered himself as "King of All Nations, and King of the World." As Christ's servant, he was claiming dominion over the whole globe in Jesus' name. He even devised a coronation ceremony that he repeated on numerous occasions in various locations.

"I crowned myself in every state, and at 67 colleges, and I visited 101 nations and crowned myself king in every one, including Russia, in Red Square, in Moscow, on July 12, 1958," he told the *New York Times*. "Crowds greeted me everywhere."

The "Handwriting on the Ballot" for Bro. Homer is the "Handwriting on the Wall" to end Communism
PRESENT THIS REQUEST AT VOTING BOOTH.

I REQUEST INFORMATION HOW TO VOTE FOR

Bishop Homer A. Tomlinson

← New York



→ Bishop
Raymond L. Teague

Alaska,
VICE PRESIDENT



Bishop Homer A. Tomlinson for U.S. President

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. For Union of Church and State in Jesus, Prince of Peace. | 8. To End Use of Tobacco, Intoxicants, Narcotics, Gambling. |
| 2. To Keep U.S. Constitution, Freedom of Worship, Liberty. | 9. To Assure Equality for all Races, Nations. |
| 3. For 10% Tithes - for Church and Nation, Instead of Taxes | 10. To Abandon Roman Law, English Common Law, Establish New Codes, Civil and Criminal. |
| 4. To Maintain 1960 Scale of Wages, Profits, Progress. | 11. Establish King James Bible as Foundation of Righteousness. |
| 5. For Unlimited Production, 10% Profits for Farmers. | 12. Follow New Revelations in Government and Peace. |
| 6. To End Wars, Crime, Delinquency. | |
| 7. To Unite Families, End Divorces. | |

THE THEOCRATIC PARTY

National Headquarters

9305-224th St., Queens Village 28, N. Y.

National Chairman

Rev. W. R. Rogers

The *New York Times* describes his coronation ritual better than I could possibly hope to:

The portly, pink-faced, cheery leader of the Church of God had often proclaimed himself King of the World...With his inflatable plastic globe, his portable throne made of a \$6 aluminum folding lawn chair, his little crown gilded by a sign painter, and his 15-inch flag...he had been an eye-catching figure in the capitals of the world...as he sat on his throne in a long Chinese robe...(*The New York Times*, Friday, December 6, 1968.)

It must have dawned on Tomlinson at some point that being "King of the World" was a bit like being named "Governor of the Moon". It was a nice title, but didn't mean very much without any actual power or authority to go along with it. It was clear that Tomlinson himself must attain some political position from which to usher in the change in governments. The obvious answer was for the Bishop to seek the office of President of the United States on a "union of church and state" ticket

Accordingly, Bishop Homer Aubrey Tomlinson was nominated for the U.S. presidency on July 4th, 1952 at a national convention of his branch of the Church of God in Nashville, Tennessee. Bishop Willie Isaac Bass of Fayetteville, North Carolina delivered Homer's nominating speech, and was in turn tapped for the vice-presidential nod. Willie Bass was a Church of God leader who had

helped to secure the Moses Tabernacle in Nashville for use by the convention.

Both Tomlinson and Bass maintained an active campaign schedule. Since Homer still felt a calling as a missionary, he campaigned outside of the country as well, and was sometimes received in smaller nations as a visiting American presidential candidate. The Theocratic Party had not been formed as yet, so the two nominees ran under the banner of the "Church of God Party", an unofficial arm of the church. (Tomlinson himself was still a registered Republican at this point.)

On election day that November, Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson received all of the news coverage, and most of the votes. A variety of third party nominees split what was left over. Tomlinson and Bass, however, received no recorded votes in any state. It is probable, of course, that some members of the Church of God wrote their names in here and there, but, if so, no such tally can be uncovered from any of the official statistical sources for the 1952 campaign. The ticket did, however, receive permanent historical mention of their nominating convention in Kane's *Facts About the Presidents*, Congressional Quarterly Service's *Guide to U.S. Elections* and the APIC-sponsored *Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates* research project, compiled in 1963.

Tomlinson was not discouraged by his poor showing. He quit the Republican Party and announced again for president as a write-in candidate in 1956. This time, he did not bother with a convention, a running-mate or a party designation, considering them mere formalities. As a result, he drew even less recognition for his efforts than before. "Basically, he just allowed his name to be used in '56," Bishop Bill Rogers later recalled in a telephone interview. Tomlinson's campaign this time around did not even draw a notation in any of the above-named historical sources that had listed him in 1952.

Rather than throw in the towel after two ignominious defeats, Bishop Tomlinson embarked on another quest for the White House in the midst of the John F. Kennedy-Richard M. Nixon contest of 1960. His third effort would mark the birth of the Theocratic Party and the distribution of his first campaign button.

The Theocratic Party held its first national nominating convention at a small church in the sleepy little town of Fulton, Missouri on May 21 and 22, 1960. Fulton is located in Callaway county, northeast of Jefferson City, and, in 1960, had a population of 11,131. The pastor of the local Church of God congregation in Fulton was Rev. William R. (Bill) Rogers, so the delegates elected him as the first national chairman of the Theocratic Party.

Next, the small assemblage turned to the business of choosing a national ticket. Naturally, they picked Homer A. Tomlinson for president. They then chose Bishop Raymond L. Teague, the Church of God's missionary to Alaska, for vice-president. The party members were hopeful that this would draw attention to their ticket, since Alaska would vote in its first ever presidential contest that fall, and now there was a 'favorite son' from the 49th state in the race. Unfortunately, Alaska did not count write-in



Theocratic Party campaign items from 1964.

Mighty Man of God for

U. S. PRESIDENT TOMLINSON

<p>FOR U.S. PRESIDENT</p>  <p>BISHOP HOMER A. TOMLINSON 9305 224th St. Queens Village, N.Y. ALL WELCOME Daily and Sunday</p>	<p>FOR VICE PRESIDENT</p>  <p>BISHOP W.R. ROGERS 311 W. 2nd St. Fulton, Mo. ALL WELCOME Daily and Sunday</p>
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"WHEN THE RIGHTEOUS ARE IN AUTHORITY, THE PEOPLE REJOICE"
Prov. 29:2

the GOLDEN AGE

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For Union of Church and State in Jesus, Prince of Peace. 2. To keep U.S. Constitution, Freedom of Worship, Liberty. 3. For 10% Tithes-for Church and Nation, Instead of Taxes. 4. To Maintain 1964 Scale of Wages, Profits, Progress. 5. For Unlimited Production, Free Enterprise. 6. To End Wars, Crime, Delinquency. 7. To Unite Families, End Divorces. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. To End Use of Tobacco, Intoxicants, Narcotics, Gambling. 9. To Assure Equality for all Races, Nations. 10. To Abandon Roman Law, English Common Law, Establish New Codes, Civil and Criminal. 11. Establish Bible Reading, Prayer in All Schools. 12. Follow New Revelations in Government and Peace.
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THEOCRATIC PARTY

"GOVERNMENT UNDER GOD"

votes, and there was little chance that the Theocrats could make the ballot there in 1960.

The Tomlinson-Teague ticket did not prove to be much of an attention-getter in the national press either. The Bishops did receive a brief mention in a survey article on minor parties in the *New York Times* by Harold Faber. In his review, entitled "Minority Groups Also Seek Votes" Faber devoted one paragraph to the Theocratic Party, noting that one of Tomlinson's platform planks is to "end all taxes".

The 1960 campaign also produced an interesting item for collectors: Homer Tomlinson's first campaign button. The pin itself is white with blue lettering, and bears a photo of the Bishop, with the words: "Theocratic Party, For Peace On Earth. Homer A. Tomlinson - Overseer, The Church of God, Queens Village 28, N.Y." The button also features an American flag on the left, and the Church of God flag on the right. It is a celluloid issue, and does not bear any disclaimer or company of origin on the curl. Although the button does not state specifically that Tomlinson was running for president, it was sent out to interested correspondents by the party from its New York office during the 1960 campaign. It should also be noted here parenthetically that the same pin was used again in 1964, as Tomlinson apparently had a box of them left over from four years prior. Thus it becomes a valid campaign item for either year.

In spite of his *New York Times* coverage and his new campaign button, Tomlinson went on to duplicate exactly his 1952 and 1956 showings. Once again, the ticket failed to gain ballot position or certified write-in status in a single state, and no votes were recorded for Tomlinson or Teague anywhere. Homer himself would later claim that he had in fact received 3 million write-ins in 1960, but none can be found in any of the official printed results.

After 1960, Tomlinson did a bit of soul-searching concerning his continuing presidential efforts. He considered supporting former Minnesota Governor Harold E. Stassen for the Republican nomination in 1964, because the perennial G.O.P. aspirant served as head of the American Baptist Convention, and thus, as president, would be capable of uniting church and state.

In the end, however, the Bishop did decide to seek the White House for a fourth time. He announced his candidacy for the Theocratic Party nomination at his Queens Village home on January 10th, 1964, promising the voters "a platform of righteousness."

Tomlinson believed that this time he might be able to garner publicity through a traditional front-porch campaign, thanks to the fact that the 1964 World's Fair was to be held in New York from April 22 to October 31. Advance publicity for the event stated that 44 million visitors from all fifty states and numerous foreign countries were expected to attend. Homer delighted in the fact that the fair would take place only a ten minute drive from his house. He would be closer to the action than any of the other candidates. This time, the voters would actually be coming to him. "Instead of campaigning in all states...I can conduct my campaigns from the front door of my

house, where I have lived since 1920."

There were other reasons to be optimistic. Several years before, the Bishop had begun publication of a twice monthly newspaper simply called *The Church of God*. It was a four-page tabloid, and was mailed to subscribers for \$1.50 a year. Single copies sold for 7¢. It was a good way to alert the faithful to church news and to developments in the presidential campaign. Naturally, Homer printed his announcement of candidacy in an early 1964 issue. The paper would continue to follow his activities throughout the election year, and was a good way to avoid the mass media blackout that he had endured in the past as a minor party candidate.

When the few delegates to the Theocratic Party national convention began to assemble at the Church of God in Fulton, Missouri on May 21, 1964, the nomination of Bishop Tomlinson for the presidency was a foregone conclusion. The interesting selection would be the pick for vice-president. The General Overseer of the Church of God, World Headquarters was 72 years old in 1964. (He was born on October 25, 1892 in Westfield, Indiana.) For this reason he needed a younger, vigorous running mate, one who could undertake a great deal of the domestic campaigning while the Bishop continued with his world travels.

The choice the delegates made was an obvious one. The pastor of the convention's host congregation was Rev. William Richard (Bill) Rogers. He had been elevated to Bishop by Bishop Tomlinson himself, and had been chosen as the first national chairman of the Theocratic Party back in 1960, only two months after the party's initial formation. He had also served as the campaign manager for the Tomlinson/Teague ticket that year, and had scored a minor publicity coup for the party when a speech he made in Cape Girardeau, Missouri in which he called for 30,000,000 write-in votes for Tomlinson for president was picked up by the Associated Press wire service and reported in daily newspapers across the country.

Bill Rogers was born on May 1, 1923 in Rougemont, North Carolina. This made him 41 years old in 1964, and provided him with yet another asset the party needed. He was to be the youthful counterpart to the now grandfatherly Homer Tomlinson. Like Homer, Rogers had an interest in missionary work, and he promised to be a tireless campaigner. Unlike Homer, however, Rogers had not wandered from his small town roots and gone to live in the big city. "I'm just a country boy," Bill Rogers is still fond of saying, and that is true. He had remained the pastor of a small church in the midwest, and probably better reflected the rural origins of the Church of God than did Tomlinson himself.

Bishop Rogers had worked as a professional baseball umpire in several regional minor leagues, including the Kitty League and the Mountain States League, for three years before he began preaching in 1950. He had lived in small towns in North Carolina, Alabama, Kansas and Missouri. From 1951 to 1959, he and his wife, Becky, traveled throughout the south as Rogers worked as an itinerant evangelist. He claims to have preached in at least thir-

teen states during this period. Becky would play the piano at his meetings, and shared in some of the regular nightly preaching chores as well.

Rogers' education in the classroom never went beyond the eleventh grade in a two-room schoolhouse in North Carolina. "That's just the beginning though," Rogers confides. "My education by the Holy Ghost began in 1951. God spoke to me that year. He told me that someday I would be sent out to stand before the rulers of the world."

This was Rogers' down-home faith in 1964 and today as well. This was the kind of nominee that Bishop Tomlinson and the other delegates in Fulton wanted to complete their national ticket. So, W.R. "Bill" Rogers was nominated for vice-president on May 22, 1964. Rogers had first been introduced to the Church of God movement by Bishop Willie I. Bass of North Carolina, the group's 1952 vice-presidential candidate. Now Rogers himself would be joining Tomlinson on the campaign hustings. For the purposes of the campaign, the party even established a temporary national headquarters by opening a post office box at the Fulton, Missouri post office so that Bishop Rogers could receive campaign mail directly.

The Theocratic delegates also adopted a 1964 platform, which was to be reprinted on handbills and posters, in both English and Spanish. The twelve points of the presidential platform that year stressed "Government Under God", and dealt with both governmental policy and personal moral conduct. The various planks included "Union of Church and State in Jesus...Freedom of Worship...10% Tithes for Church and Nation Instead of Taxes...Maintain 1964 scale of U.S. Wages In All Nations...Free Enterprise...End Wars, Crime, Civil Strife...End Divorce...End Use of Tobacco, Intoxicants, Narcotics, Gambling...Assure Equality for all Races, Nations...Establish new 1964 Criminal and Civil Codes, Abolish Roman Law and English Common Law...Bible Reading and Prayer in All Schools...New Revelations in Government and Peace." (Above from *1964 Theocratic Party Platform* as printed by the party.)

Rogers pledged himself to the principles outlined in the party platform and immediately began a vigorous campaign for the vice-presidency. He recalled recently:

After the nomination in May of 1964, I campaigned in Missouri, Idaho, Washington and Kansas. I met up with Bishop Tomlinson in October, 1964 in Lawrence, Kansas for a speech at the University of Kansas that night. We went on to Westminster College, in Fulton, and spoke there the next day...I went to New York City as the V.P. candidate, carrying the Theocratic banner. I took it with me when I visited the

church booths in the pavilions at the 1964 World's Fair there. We got a good reception from them. The Bible says in Psalm 60:4, 'Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth.' So we had a banner with us, and we campaigned for Theocracy. (From a telephone conversation with Bishop Bill Rogers, June 3, 1993.)

Once again, the party failed to obtain a ballot column for its nominees in a single state. This, of course, resulted in meager publicity in the daily press, and on television and radio. The *New York Times* did list the Theocrats at the end of a lengthy article on third party campaigns by Ben A. Franklin the weekend before the general election. In one paragraph of coverage, Franklin noted Bishop Tomlinson's opposition to smoking, drinking, drugs and gambling, and his support for a mandatory 10% church tithe "in lieu of taxes."

On election day, November 3, the Theocratic Party duplicated the feat of 1952, 1956 and 1960. For the fourth time, no certified votes were recorded for its ticket anywhere in the country. All of this could have been solved, of course, by simply placing the ticket on the ballot in some state by 1968. Rogers recalled that he hoped for just that. "We were disappointed, but still hopeful," he said later.



On this hilltop site overlooking the intersection of Interstate 70 and Highway 54 at Kingdom City, Bishop Homer A. Tomlinson of New York City (right) head of the Church of God, designated a 33-acre site (not owned by the church) as the location for a future King's Palace when the Theocratic Party wins the national election and puts its candidate in the White House. Named as the 1968 candidate for President this weekend at the party's national convention in Fulton was Bishop W.R. Rogers (center). At left is the Rev. Floyd Roberson, a convention delegate from Greenville, Tenn.

(Tribune photo by Keith McMillin)



Delegates to the 1968 Theocratic National Convention: (front row) Homer Tomlinson of New York, Bill Rogers of Missouri and Floyd Roberson of Tennessee. The two delegates in back are simply identified as Evangelist Keelinz and Elder Bell, both of Missouri.

The party did at least give collectors something to search for in 1964. They outdid themselves, in fact, by producing no less than three new celluloid campaign button designs, in addition to reusing the one from 1960. The pins were sold for 10¢ apiece, or one hundred for \$5.00 through an order form in *The Church of God* newspaper, which also offered readers the chance “to help sow the nation ‘kñee-deep’ in Campaign Literature...at 25¢ per hundred, \$2.50 per thousand.”

The Theocratic buttons included a Tomlinson/Rogers jugate with the wording, “Theocratic Party, Elect Bishops Tomlinson - Rogers U.S. President - Vice President, Men of God For Government Under God.” There was also a Tomlinson name button, reading “Mighty Man of God, Elect Bishop Tomlinson U.S. President For America’s Golden Age, Theocratic Party, Government Under God.” The third design, a Tomlinson/Rogers name pin, read “Mighty Men of God, Elect Bishops Tomlinson U.S. President, Rogers Vice President, For the Golden Age, Theocratic Party, Government Under God.” The jugate pin featured black and red lettering on a white background, while the two name buttons featured blue and red letters on white. Needless to say, the buttons should also probably receive an award for putting the most words on a single campaign button. They certainly rank right up there with the buttons used by Emil Matalik of the United Nations Party that same year.

Surprisingly, with all that wording, none of the three 1964 presidential pins featured a disclaimer, union bug or manufacturer name on the curl. There is no estimate as to how many of these buttons were produced, but they still show up quite regularly in collectors’ shows and on auction lists. There doesn’t seem to be a shortage of them.

Almost immediately after the 1964 general election, the Theocratic Party leadership made a decision to contest the presidential election in 1968. A new strategy was developed that would provide the party with a presidential nominee at an early date, and would allow time for ballot position to be achieved in the various states. This would also have the added advantage of allowing a longer time for campaign trips and a resulting build-up in publicity.

This time, however, the presidential nominee would not be Homer A. Tomlinson. The Bishop had become more and more involved with his own missionary activities, and was out of the country much of the time. A logical replacement at the top of the ticket would be Bishop Bill Rogers, who had campaigned tirelessly as the 1964 vice-presidential choice. Tomlinson gave Rogers his personal endorsement for the task.

Accordingly, Bishop Rogers was tapped for the presidency by the Theocratic Party leaders, including Bishop Tomlinson, at a meeting in May of 1965, and began his campaign immediately thereafter. A regular convention would be held in early 1967, but, meanwhile, Rogers would have the full backing of the Church of God, World Headquarters, the Theocratic Party and Tomlinson himself as he pursued the White House.

Bill Rogers for U.S. President, 1968

Joshua- Jericho “Exploits”

Walk Seven Times Around
Court Houses. Watch
“Walls of Unrighteousness” Fall.



THEOCRATIC PARTY

HEADQUARTERS: NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL
89-05 224th ST., QUEENS VILLAGE
NEW YORK, U. S. A. 11438

“GOVERNMENT
UNDER GOD”

“WHEN THE
RIGHTEOUS
ARE IN
AUTHORITY,
THE PEOPLE
REJOICE”

Enroll as Member

Help bring forth the “Kingdom of God on Earth as it is in heaven.” Send for free literature and information about enrolling as a Member of the Theocratic Party.

Bishop W.R. “Bill Rogers” has already started his campaign, will walk seven times around every County Court House in all fifty States.

EMBLEM OF THEOCRATIC PARTY



ENROLLMENT

NAME _____

St. & No. or RFD. _____

City _____ State _____

Campaign flier (reduced in size).

After his selection by the party leadership in May, 1965, Rogers waited until September to begin his actual campaign. He started in Missouri and began working his way further and further outward. He remembered a few of his exploits in a conversation recently:

I went to campaign at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, which was one of the country's first integrated colleges. I went out to Los Angeles to do the Joe Pyne T.V. show, and talked about the church taking over the state. Of course, the biggest thing (of the 1968 campaign) was our Joshua-Jericho exploits at the court houses.

Rogers was referring to the fact that in 1966 he took his campaign to 132 county court houses and one state house around the nation, and marched—with a Rogers for President poster in hand—seven times around each court house. The first six laps should be accomplished in prayer and silence, and the seventh would involving praise, jumping and shouting in the Lord. Rogers continues his story:

In Bowling Green, Kentucky, at the court house there, some folks were hanging out the windows, kind of watching me march around. They thought it was all a big joke, so when I went around the last time, I said, 'If there be any corruption in this court house, may it burst apart.'

Lee Gordon, T.V. news reporter for channel 13 in Jefferson City, Missouri, was there, and he heard me say this, and the local newspaper people did too. This was in late September of '65 when I was just starting the court house campaign.

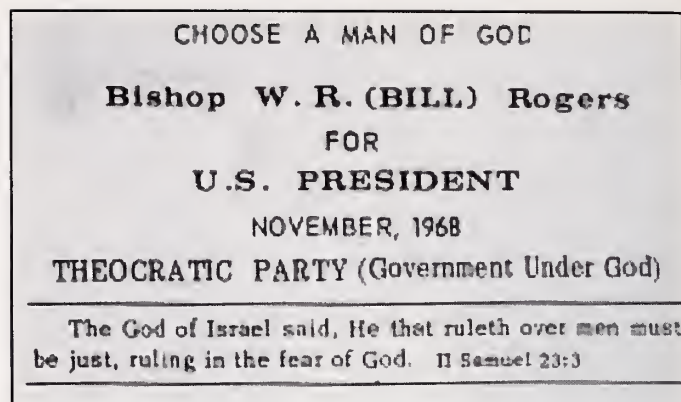
Anyway, the next day part of the porch cracked loose at that court house, and it was reported that I had prophesied it. People would ask me after that if I was going to crack open any more court houses. I told them that was up to the Lord.

I don't know if it ever happened again, but someone did tell me that there were unconfirmed reports of plaster shaking loose at the court house in Denver, Colorado in several newspapers after I had been out there.

There was nothing else like that Bowling Green court house cracking, though. The thing was that it was a brand new court house, so nobody could ever explain it afterwards.

Although the numerous court house "Joshua-Jericho" walks were the most prominent and most newsworthy aspect of the 1968 Rogers campaign, they were far from the only campaigning that "Bishop Bill" did. By his own estimate, he visited over 30 colleges in Ohio, and another 30 in Missouri, as well as campuses in other states. "The college newspapers would always cover us, you know," Rogers recollected. "All in all, I believe I traveled over 76,000 miles, mostly by Greyhound bus, but sometimes by air."

When the Theocratic Party convened its nominating convention at the Westminster College campus chapel in



1968 Theocratic Party handout card boosting Bill Rogers for President.

Fulton, Missouri on Friday, March 17th, 1967, it was clear that the small group of delegates assembled there would all support Bishop Rogers as their official presidential nominee. Also present were some bemused Westminster students.

Bishop Homer Tomlinson gave the keynote address on Friday evening. He was introduced by Dr. Charles Kerr, a professor of political science at Westminster - who somehow was roped into acting as temporary convention chairman. Kerr became thoughtful when asked about the Theocratic Party. "They may symbolize courage and conviction," he told a local newspaper reporter. "It takes courage to run around courthouses and call oneself King of the World. The Theocratic Party symbolizes the unreality and uncertainty of all political utopias. They wear the armor of Don Quixote. They are courageous, determined, tragic, funny, sad, and beautiful. And so are most of us, who also have these same qualities."

Rogers accepted the convention's nomination, and added a new plank to the Theocratic Party platform: "Stop the war in Vietnam. We're going to have to stop that war. American boys are dying and children left homeless as it gets bloodier day by day. We shouldn't have been there in the first place. I believe I can stop the war and without losing American integrity. I would stop the bombing and pull back our troops for 60 days and as a man of God talk with Hanoi."

Rogers also discussed with the delegates his own background as a U.S. Naval veteran of Okinawa during World War II, and showed them the 37-inch Texas steer horn that he used as a trumpet during his marches around the nation's court houses. He told them all that he was quite optimistic that the party would make the ballot in several states in 1968, including Missouri. The group then paid a visit to Bishop Rogers' local church nearby, and Bishop Tomlinson left for a church meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. The two-day convention adjourned, its tasks completed.

By the time of the convention, the Rogers campaign had already issued its one and only campaign button. It was a gray celluloid photo pin with black lettering. In addition to the picture of Bishop Rogers, the button proclaimed. "Theocratic Party. Bill Rogers for U.S. President

- 1968." It was available from Rogers' Fulton campaign headquarters.

There was also a foreign aspect to Rogers' presidential campaign trips. "I visited South Vietnam in late October, 1966, and *Stars and Stripes* (the armed forces' newspaper) covered my trip there. I flew from Bangkok, Thailand to Saigon, and then on to Hong Kong and to Taiwan. I received good local press coverage when I visited India and campaigned for Theocracy there. I also stopped in Tokyo, Japan, and in Okinawa. On my Middle Eastern tour, I was in Damascus, Syria, Baghdad, Iraq, Egypt, and the city of Jerusalem with Bishop Tomlinson in October of 1966. I believe that I visited 22 countries in all during that campaign." (Telephone conversation with Bishop Bill Rogers, June 3, 1993.)

Although Rogers states further: "I was the only one of the candidates to visit Vietnam during the 1968 campaign", he is misinformed on this point. Fred Halstead, presidential nominee of the Socialist Workers' Party also visited South Vietnam, and talked with U.S. soldiers there.

Michigan Governor George Romney also visited South Vietnam during his brief quest for the Republican Party nomination - and was "brain-washed" in the bargain, thus ending his campaign efforts.

For the 1968 campaign, the Theocratic Party platform was expanded to 48 points, divided into four separate sections: "Twelve Laws For Individuals" (actually the Ten Commandments, plus a command to obey Jesus Christ and an admonition to "Love one another"), "Twelve Laws For World Government", "Twelve Laws For Individual Nations" and "Twelve Laws of Criminal, Cival (sic) Codes To End Crime & Strife."

One thing that the Rogers campaign did not get around to doing was to name a vice-presidential running-mate for the Bishop. The 1967 convention did not name one, and, ultimately, the choice was left up to Rogers himself. "I had a man in mind," he told me. "I was considering a former Marine sergeant, a fellow named Bill Everson. He was a good man, but it never happened. No vice-presidential choice was ever made."

What did happen instead was that the Bill Rogers campaign simply self-destructed. Or, more accurately, it ceased to exist. Rogers recalled:

I withdrew from the presidential race in late May, 1968, after campaigning hard for three full years. I had discovered that we were not going to get on the ballot anywhere, even in Missouri. I had gone to the court houses. I had traveled all over, but the organization wasn't there. I felt a call to go into full-time ministry and to preach the gospel. That's what I did.

Rogers' disappointment is obvious, and understandable. After waging the most vigorous campaign ever waged by the Theocratic Party, and stumping the country and the world for three years, he found that the necessary structural work had not been done, and the party was no further along than it had been in previous contests...all through no fault of his own. In a sense, whether it meant to or not, the Theocratic Party had taken advantage of Bishop Rogers' boundless energy and his will to work.

The withdrawal of Bill Rogers from the race no doubt surprised the members of the Theocratic Party. Nevertheless, a substitute ticket was quickly named, consisting of Bishop Tomlinson for president, and Bishop Buford McKenzie of St. Louis, Missouri, a traveling evangelist for the Church of God, for vice-president.

"Bishop Tomlinson was too ill to campaign," Bill Rogers remembered. "He had been sick for some time, and Buford McKenzie didn't really campaign either. It was just kind of a stand-in ticket. They put their names up, that's about all."

The entry of Bishop Tomlinson into the 1968 contest was a surprise even to himself. He had thought that his challenge to President Lyndon B. Johnson and Arizona Senator Barry M. Goldwater in 1964 would be his last presidential effort, but now he found himself facing Republican Richard M. Nixon and Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968...and at the last minute to boot. Although not well enough to campaign, he was willing to see his name put forth for a fifth and last time.

The Tomlinson/McKenzie campaign did manage to get a new celluloid jugate button printed up before November 5th. The pin features a red rim and a white center with black-and-white photos of the two replacement nominees. It reads: "Theocratic Party. Bishop Tomlinson for President. Bishop McKenzie for Vice President. 1968. Deliverance For America." Collector Jon D. Curtis of Green Bay, Wisconsin states that there



Bill Rogers' 1968 campaign was a landmark for the Theocratic Party. The earnest minister from Missouri campaigned actively in many states.



1968 Theocratic Party button from Bill Rogers' active campaign. Rogers later withdrew.

are in fact two versions of this pin, one with larger head shots of the candidates, and one with smaller photos. Jon also has a third variety of this button, without the names of either candidate listed. This may only be a misrun, however.

In the short time remaining before the election, Tomlinson did not receive very much press coverage. William H. Honan authored a lengthy survey article about minor party candidates for the *New York Times Magazine*, with a short section devoted to the Bishop's campaign. He noted that Tomlinson was now 76 years old, but did not mention his failing health. He also noted Homer's previous crowning of himself as King of the World in 1954, and quoted the candidate as saying that the Kingdom of God would appear on earth "in the next seven years." An old 1964 Tomlinson for President button was also pictured in the article.

The most impressive bit of coverage, however, actually appeared before Bill Rogers' withdrawal. *The New Yorker* magazine devoted 22 pages to a profile of Homer A. Tomlinson and the Church of God, World Headquarters in its September 24th, 1966 issue. "I believe it was the longest story every devoted to one person in that magazine," Bishop Rogers recalled. Whether or not it was the longest, it was indeed quite long by magazine standards of the day.

Rogers was alluded to several times in the *New Yorker* piece as the 1968 Theocratic nominee, and Tomlinson was portrayed as being retired from electioneering. The Missouri Bishop was even quoted at some length on his opinion of Tomlinson, which, of course, was positive. It is a fascinating account, written by William Whitworth, of Homer's travels and kingly activities, authored with tongue firmly planted in cheek.

On election day, Bishops Tomlinson and McKenzie received no recorded votes. Homer was now five for five; not just five losses, but five goose-egg totals. At the time of the 1968 race, the Church of God, World Headquarters claimed about 75,000 members worldwide. With many of them living within the United States, Tomlinson's successive failures become that much more difficult to understand. Surely the manpower was there for the Bishop to have obtained ballot position in at least a few states each time he ran, and yet, no serious attempts to do so were ever made by church members around the country. When considering this, Bishop Rogers' 1968 withdrawal seems more and more logical.

Interestingly, the official sources of presidential nominee information all still list William R. "Bill" Rogers as the Theocratic Party nominee for 1968. His withdrawal is not noted by Congressional Quarterly Service's *Guide To U.S. Elections*, nor by Joseph Nathan Kane in his *Facts About the Presidents*. Whether he likes it or not, Bishop Rogers remains in the statistical record books as the party's candidate that year. Tomlinson's late entry into the race is not recorded.

Bishop Tomlinson did not live much past the end of the '68 campaign. As noted here earlier, he had been ill for some time. He died at Manhattan Veterans Hospital on Wednesday, December 4th, 1968 at age 76. The *New York Times* honored him with a lengthy obituary with photo, while Time magazine noted his passing in its "Milestones" column and Newsweek included his death in its "Transition" feature. Other news sources also reported his demise.

After Tomlinson's passing, the Church of God, World Headquarters relocated to Huntsville, Alabama, where a new General Overseer was soon named. Not much has been heard of the group since. Many of the local congregations, always rather autonomous anyway, have gone their own way. The Theocratic Party, meanwhile, ceased to exist altogether immediately after the 1968 campaign. Even their occasional contesting of local races stopped at this time.

For example, Rev. Floyd Roberson, pastor of the Church of God congregation in Greeneville, Tennessee, was the Theocratic Party candidate for mayor of that city in 1966. He even achieved ballot position, a rare feat for a Theocrat. In his campaign, he advocated Holiness and 'Full Gospel' principles, and even copied Bill Rogers' Joshua-Jericho walks by marching around his local county court house seven times. This kind of electioneering on the part of Church of God members ended with Bishop Tomlinson's death in 1968.

Bishop Bill Rogers did not disappear from public view, however. He still pastors his small church in Fulton, where he and his wife, Becky, continue to live. He is a frequent contributor of guest opinion columns and letters-to-the-editor in *The Fulton Sun*, his city's daily newspaper. He has also written several booklets on biblical topics, including *Things Pertaining To the Kingdom*, published a few years ago by the Church of God Missionary Fund.



After Bill Rogers withdrew, Homer Tomlinson again accepted the Theocratic nomination along with running mate Buford McKenzie. Both men are identified as bishops in the Church of God.

National politics is no longer a central part of Bill Rogers' life. He does admit, however, that he still thinks about it. "I considered a second run for president in 1992, but didn't do it," he told me recently. "Politics in America has gotten to a disgraceful state. I feel I might still run again in 1996, but I'll leave that up to the Lord."

The thrust of Bishop Rogers' life over the last twenty-five years has not been politics, but has been world missionary activity. As of this writing, he has made 68 foreign evangelistic journeys to 61 different nations. Among the countries he has preached in recently are Liberia, Belize (where he met with the Prime Minister), El Salvadore, Zaire, Guatamala, Nigeria, Haiti and Siberia. "In Siberia, I spoke to huge crowds, and shared a platform with two Russian Orthodox Bishops. Many had walked a long way just to be there," he recalled.

Rogers was ordained as a bishop in the Church of God by Bishop Tomlinson on March 3rd, 1956. He told *The Fulton Sun* that he had never attended a formal seminary. The Church of God, he explained, ordained its bishops "from a spiritual standpoint, not an educational one." In the same article, he looked back at his 1968 presidential campaign, telling the *Sun* reporter that he had not counted on being elected that year, but was simply using his candidacy "to pave the way for Christians to become more involved in politics."

Reading about and listening to the list of Rogers' activities and adventures over the past two decades, one cannot help but wonder what would have happened had the Missouri Bishop remained in the 1968 race and actually qualified for the ballot in a few states. Obviously, the Theocrats would have still never seen a winning campaign, but they might have found a sort of permanent niche as a pentecostal or rural fundamentalist minor party that could have become an enduring stalwart of minority party politics in latter twentieth century America. That may not have been much, but at least they could have taken their place alongside the Prohibition Party, the Socialist Party and other longstanding fringe groups that still give voice to a small but dedicated segment of the electorate every four years.

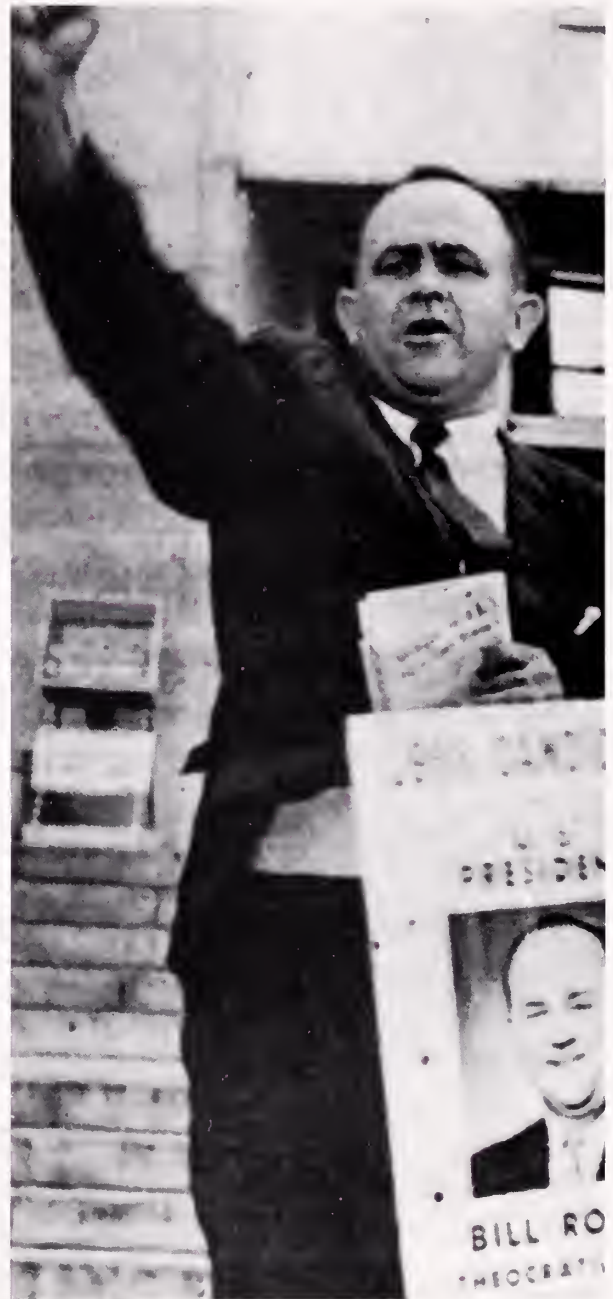
Bishop Rogers never crowned himself a king, nor did he engage in many of the sundry other eccentricities of Homer Tomlinson. Perhaps under his campaign leadership, the party and the Church of God itself could have returned to the simple rural, agrarian, small town roots of nineteenth century America from which they sprang. This would have allowed the Theocrats to become not an electoral force but a continuing footnote to our quadrennial presidential jousting matches, rather than just a bizarre question mark.

Bishop Rogers takes it all in stride nowadays. He still has his vision of a coming theocracy, and of the church taking over the state. His belief in this has not diminished. As I concluded my last conversation with him, he told me: "God spoke to me in 1961, right after the 1960 campaign, and He told me, 'It shall come in your day.' I believe it was the Lord, and so I'm still waiting."★

SOURCES: I wish to thank Bishop W.R. "Bill" Rogers for consenting to two lengthy telephone interviews with me on Saturday, May 22nd, and Thursday, June 3rd, 1993. He has an excellent memory, and revealed himself to me as a friendly, patient and decent Christian gentleman. All quotes from Bill Rogers appearing in this article, unless otherwise noted, are a result of these interviews.

Thanks also go to Timothy Coughlin and Michael Kelly for supplying me with Theocratic Party literature to help in my research. I also made use of news clippings and Theocratic handouts from my own collection.

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The Rogers-for-President campaign was marked by his "Joshua-Jericho" walks around numerous county courthouses.



The Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph taken at a Democratic rally in Flint, Michigan by William Gallagher of the *Flint Journal*, Michigan Governor G. Mesmer "Soapy" Williams is left of Stevenson.