



Revolt of the Tar Heels: The North Carolina Populist Movement, 1890-1901

James M. Beeby

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During the 1890s, North Carolina witnessed a political revolution as the newly formed Populist Party joined with the Republicans to throw out do-nothing, conservative Democrats. Focusing on political transformation, electoral reform, and new economic policies to aid poor and struggling farmers, the Populists and their coalition partners took power at all levels in the only southern state where Populists gained statewide office. For a brief four years, the Populists and Republicans gave an object lesson in progressive politics in which whites and African Americans worked together for the betterment of the state and the lives of the people.

James M. Beeby examines the complex history of the rise and fall of the Populist Party in the late nineteenth century. His book explores the causes behind the political insurgency of small farmers in the state. It offers the first comprehensive and in-depth study of the movement, focusing on local activists as well as state leadership. It also elucidates the relationship between Populists and African Americans, the nature of cooperation between Republicans and Populists, and local dynamics and political campaigning in the Gilded Age. In a last-gasp attempt to return to power, the Democrats focused on the Populists' weak point--race. The book closes with an analysis of the virulent campaign of white supremacy engineered by threatened Democrats and the ultimate downfall of already quarreling Populists and Republicans. With the defeat of the Populist ticket, North Carolina joined other southern states by entering an era of segregation and systematic disfranchisement.

James M. Beeby is an assistant professor of history at Indiana University Southeast.

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