

## Information Sheet

**R**      **Agricultural Wheel. No. 657 (High Gate, Mo.).**  
**396**      **Records, 1888-1890.**  
            **Two folders, photocopies.**

This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri](http://The State Historical Society of Missouri). If you would like more information, please contact us at [shsresearch@umsystem.edu](mailto:shsresearch@umsystem.edu).

These are records of the local chapter of the Agricultural Wheel at High Gate in Maries County, Missouri. The records include the constitution, by-laws, membership roster and minutes of meetings, and a pamphlet containing the constitutions of the National Farmers' and Laborers' Union of America, and the Farmers' and Laborers' Union of Missouri.

The Agricultural Wheel was a nationwide secret society of individuals connected with farming. Little is known about the Wheel, but it seems to have been associated or consolidated with the Farmers' Alliance in the late 1880s. The High Gate Agricultural Wheel was organized on 4 April 1888. Eight charter members were present. The meeting was chaired by Ambrose Smith. Other organizations of the Wheel in Missouri, mentioned in the High Gate records, were Bloomington, Grove Dale, Hill, Shinkle, Star, and Vichy. One of the first orders of business of the High Gate chapter was to appoint a delegate to attend the organization of the Maries County Wheel on 10 April 1888.

The records of the High Gate Wheel consist of a small record book. Most of the entries are minutes of regular monthly meetings beginning with the organizational meeting on 4 April 1888, and continuing through 22 February 1890. The minutes indicate the agricultural and social interests of the organization. Discussions on various aspects of farming were featured at the meetings, and members enjoyed a discount on purchases at the Wheel's store at High Gate. The minutes also indicate that the local groups had charitable and social concerns. Sick or distressed members were aided by committees appointed by the Wheel. The Wheel also supported good roads, and in 1889 petitioned the Maries County court to levy taxes for road improvements. The Wheel insisted on certain standards of behavior by its members, calling individuals to task for divulging the secrets of the organization, and for drunkenness. Members could be expelled for infractions, but could also be reinstated at a later date. Membership records indicate that forty-six men and women belonged to the High Gate organization.

Although they are not extensive, the records of the High Gate Agricultural Wheel offer glimpses into farm and rural life in Missouri in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The organization flourished during the period when American agriculturists became a potent political force. Evidence of this increasing concern with political programs may be seen in the pamphlet containing national and state constitutions of the Farmers' and Laborers' Union. The pamphlet accompanies the records of the High Gate Wheel. It was published in 1889 at St. Louis, by the publishers of the *Journal of Agriculture*.

r472    22 March 1990              Mrs. Anderson Spurgeon              Loaned for photocopying

## Shelf List

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National Farmers' and Laborers' Union of America, and the Farmers' and Laborers' Union of Missouri.

Folder 1: Record book, 4 April 1888 -- 23 August 1890 (90 pages).

Folder 2: *Constitution of the National Farmers' and Laborers' Union of America, The Constitution of The Farmers' and Laborers' Union of Mo., And The Rochdale Plan of Co-operation* (St. Louis, Mo.: Journal of Agriculture, 1889) (64 pages).

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### **Index Cards**

Agricultural unions--Missouri.  
Agricultural Wheel. No. 657 (High Gate, Mo.).  
Country life--Missouri--Maries County.  
Farm life--Missouri--Maries County.  
Farmers' and Laborers' Union of Missouri.  
High Gate (Mo.).  
Maries County (Mo.).  
National Farmers' and Laborers' Union of America.