

The Historical Society of PENNSYLVANIA

LEGACIES

SPRING 2014

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1



ORGANIZING *Pennsylvania* WORKERS

Recognizing Our Supporters

The Historical Society would not be able to provide any of its valuable programs and services without each and every generous supporter. At this time, we would like to recognize the many supporters that have helped establish HSP's interpretive digital history program.

Since 2010 HSP has been building a robust framework for interpretive digital history projects that employ new technologies to tell important stories from HSP's nationally significant primary source materials. The projects make HSP's collection material not only more widely available through the web, but even more valuable and discoverable through the use of encoding and tagging and by providing such enhancements as transcription, annotation, and contextual essays. The projects also include curricular supports for educators and links to related collection materials.

In 2010, with a grant from the **Albert M. Greenfield Foundation**, HSP began development of a pilot digital history project called *Closed for Business: The Story of Bankers Trust Company during the Great Depression*, launched in April 2013. This project uses HSP collections to tell the story of the quick rise and steep fall of Bankers Trust Company, the first large bank to fail in Philadelphia during the Great Depression. Building upon this platform with a grant from the **Bank of America**, HSP developed *Preserving American Freedom*, a project that tells the story of the evolution of American freedom through 50 remarkable and nationally significant documents from HSP's collection. This project, launched

in September 2013, also expanded the user experience by allowing visitors to enter the site through multiple doors, whether through the documents themselves, thematic sections, or a new timeline feature.

HSP is again building upon its previous work as it completes the planning phase of *Uncovering William Still's Underground Railroad* this March with support from the **National Endowment for the**

Humanities (NEH) and the **Pennsylvania Abolition Society Endowment Fund** (c/o the Philadelphia Foundation). This digital project, now seeking funding for a full implementation phase, will weave new connections between the manuscript journal and published book of William Still, known as the "Father of the Underground Railroad." This effort adds new geographic and network mapping capabilities to the platform and will provide extraordinary insight into the experiences of enslaved individuals and families who passed through Philadelphia between 1852 and 1857 and the covert networks that aided their escape. Finally, the society has just begun a digital project that will focus on 500 political cartoons from the collections, but, more importantly, will develop new tools for image annotation and standard practices for describing graphic items that will improve sharing, discoverability, and interpretation. This work is supported by a grant from the **National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC)**.

We encourage each of our readers to visit our digital history projects and learn more about our current initiatives at <http://hsp.org/history-online/digital-history-projects>. Once again, thank you to all of the supporters that have made this exciting work possible.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania inspires people to create a better future through historical understanding. We envision a world where everyone understands the past, engages in the present, and works together to create a better tomorrow.

To learn more about the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and how you can support its extraordinary collections, its programs, and its publications, please visit our website at www.hsp.org or contact Jon-Chris Hatalski, Director of Institutional Development and Grants Management, at jchatalski@hsp.org or 215-732-6200 ext. 220.

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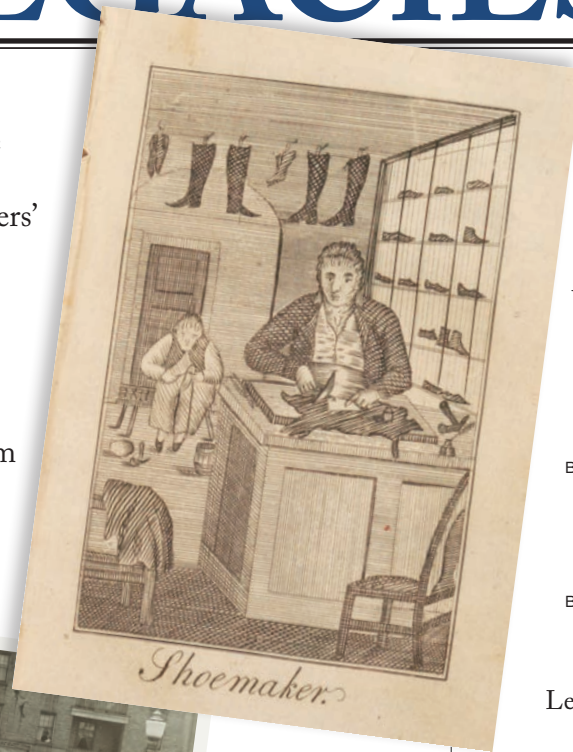
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Virginia Matthews, secretary of the Philadelphia branch of the United Textile Workers, 1934. Philadelphia Record Photograph Collection.

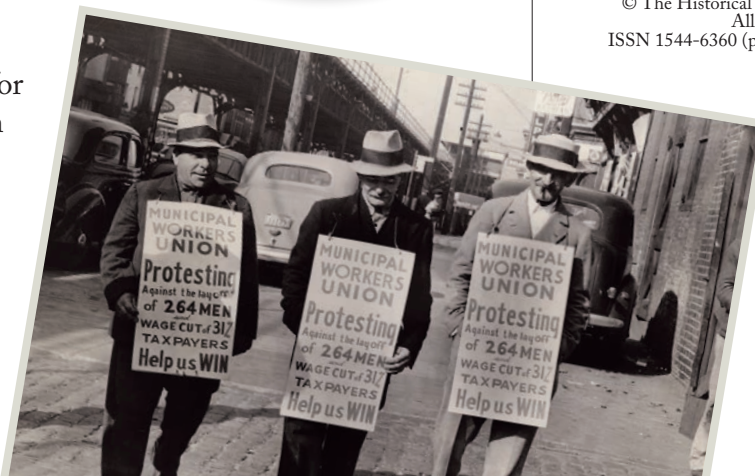
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Organizing for Workers' Rights

Pennsylvania, home of the “Steel City,” the “Workshop of the World,” and countless smaller communities that were built around the commonwealth’s extractive and manufacturing industries, has played a leading role not only in the growth of these industries but also in the history of labor and of union organizing. Students of Pennsylvania history are familiar with the violent clashes that took place in Pittsburgh and Reading during the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the battle between steel workers and Pinkerton agents during the Homestead Strike of 1892, the intervention of the federal government in the Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902 in northeast Pennsylvania, and the massive, but failed Great Steel Strike of 1919, in which one-fifth of the nation’s industrial workforce went on strike.

Long before the state became an industrial powerhouse, however, Pennsylvania workers formed associations to protect their mutual interests. As early as 1724, Philadelphia carpenters formed the Carpenters’ Company in an effort to secure safer and more secure working conditions, and other skilled workers soon followed their lead. In 1786, Philadelphia printers staged the new nation’s first documented strike for higher wages. And by 1835, workers of various trades had banded together to form the General Trades’ Union of Philadelphia and struck for a 10-hour day. In 1836, Philadelphia had 58 labor organizations. Across the state, Pittsburgh had 13.

In the years after the Civil War, as the nation—with Pennsylvania at the forefront—rapidly industrialized, new concerns about safety and worker welfare emerged. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw not only industrial growth and the amassment of great fortunes but also violent labor conflict and union organizing. By the mid-20th century, many of the unions that had played such an important role during this earlier period struggled as

Pennsylvania’s mining and manufacturing industries began their long, steady decline. In more recent times, workers in nonindustrial workplaces, including teachers, other public sector workers, and even service sector employees, have turned to new unions and forms of organization to protect their jobs, their wages, and their welfare.

Of course the story of labor organization is not one only of David versus Goliath, of the lowly worker against the giant corporation or greedy industrialist. It is also a story of ethnic and racial conflict and gender discrimination, of politics and economics, and of both resistance to and accommodation of change. Ethnic divisions between workers in the mining towns and steel mills weakened worker cohesion, while management used (and often fueled) racial hatreds by hiring black workers to break strikes. Women were not welcome in many workplaces or in most unions in the early years. As a response, they organized unions of their own. Even so, they faced special hurdles in dealing with male bosses and owners. Far from being above politics, unions have often been closely aligned with one political party—or political machine—or another. They have also had to adapt to significant and rapid economic changes. The workplace of the early 21st century looks drastically different from that of the early 19th century. While at times unions may appear to promote only the status quo, those that have been successful have had to adjust to new realities, and their histories reflect the history of broader economic, political, and social transformations.

The articles in this issue of *Legacies* can only touch on this complex and important history. Many fascinating stories are omitted, such as the story of Pennsylvania’s anthracite miners and the organization of the Workingmen’s Benevolent Association (a forerunner of the United Mine Workers); the story of William Sylvis, founder of the Iron Moulders’ International Union and later the National Labor Union in the 1860s; the story of the



Socialist-led American Federation of Hosiery Workers and the labor-based feminism of Kensington’s female hosiery workers in the 1920s; the story of the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) on Philadelphia’s waterfront, who, as documented in the *Tides of Freedom: African Presence on the Delaware River* exhibit now at Philadelphia’s Independence Seaport Museum, were able to overcome racial divisions in the early 20th century to promote their common interests; and many, many others.

What readers *will* find is a sampling that attempts to give a taste of this rich history. They will learn about artisan shoemakers in the early republic whose attempt to band together to demand better wages led instead to a court decision that declared unions illegal conspiracies and about immigrant steelworkers in western Pennsylvania who struggled for, and eventually achieved, some measure of industrial democracy. They will meet Min Matheson and hear about the difficulties of organizing the garment industry shops in the depressed coal towns of north-central Pennsylvania, and they will be reminded of the important role that unions still play for millions of workers in more recent public sector unions. They will also learn about an organization of Philadelphia printers, the International Typographical Union of Philadelphia, now part of the Printing, Publishing and Media Sector of the Communication Workers of America, in our Window on the Collections essay. Teachers will find resources to introduce students to the contributions organized labor has made to our lives today in a lesson plan focused on the Knights of Labor—perhaps the most important national union of the late 19th century, founded in Pennsylvania in 1869. For those whose appetites have been whetted by this sampling, our book and website reviews provide a starting point for further explorations. Our Food for Thought essay encourages us to think about the modern labor movement in broad terms and argues for the continued relevance of worker movements here and around the world.

TAMARA GASKELL
 Historian and Director of
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“In Union There Is Strength”: A Philadelphia Printers’ Union Takes Stock

BY RACHEL MOLOSHOK

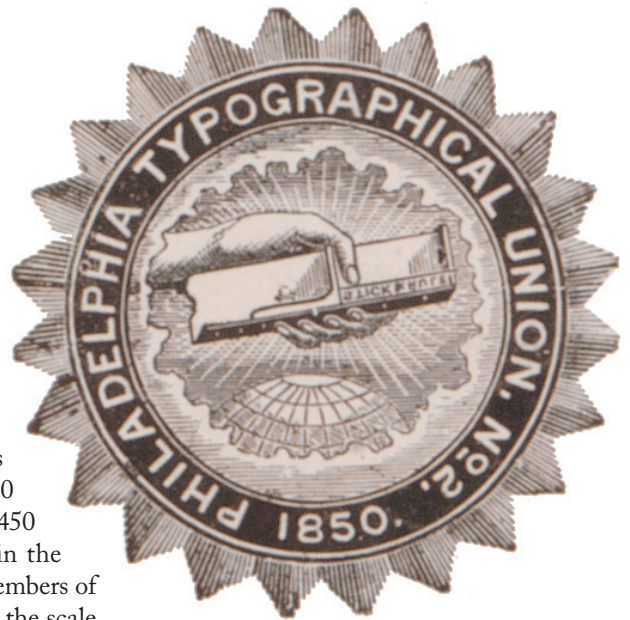
The International Typographical Union, Local 2 began in 1850 as the Journeymen Printer’s Union of Philadelphia, but its roots reach much farther back. As historian Ronald Filippeli points out, by the time Benjamin Franklin (perhaps America’s most famous printer) moved from Boston to Philadelphia in the 1720s, the city was “the center of the American printing industry. Its craftsmen produced the greatest variety of printed material and displayed the highest quality of artisanship in the colonies.” And for almost as long as there had been a printing trade in the city, its printers had looked out for one another. As Local 2’s president George Chance observed proudly at the International Union’s 40th anniversary convention, held in Philadelphia in 1892, “in the city of Philadelphia, ever since 1802, there has been a continuous organization of printers working under a scale of prices adopted by themselves.”

Printers who banded together to form the Philadelphia Typographical Society, organized in 1802, adopted a scale of prices under which they agreed mutually to operate. After more than three decades as a trade organization, the society moved to become a purely beneficial organization, and the Franklin Typographical Association, instituted in 1842, took up the mantle, adopting an updated and more detailed scale of prices in 1845. Price scales determined how to calculate the costs for printing jobs of various sorts based on the materials used; the number of ems and picas (units of measurement); whether the text to be printed was leaded, solid, or poetry without leads; and charges for proofreading and for rush printing jobs—for example, for

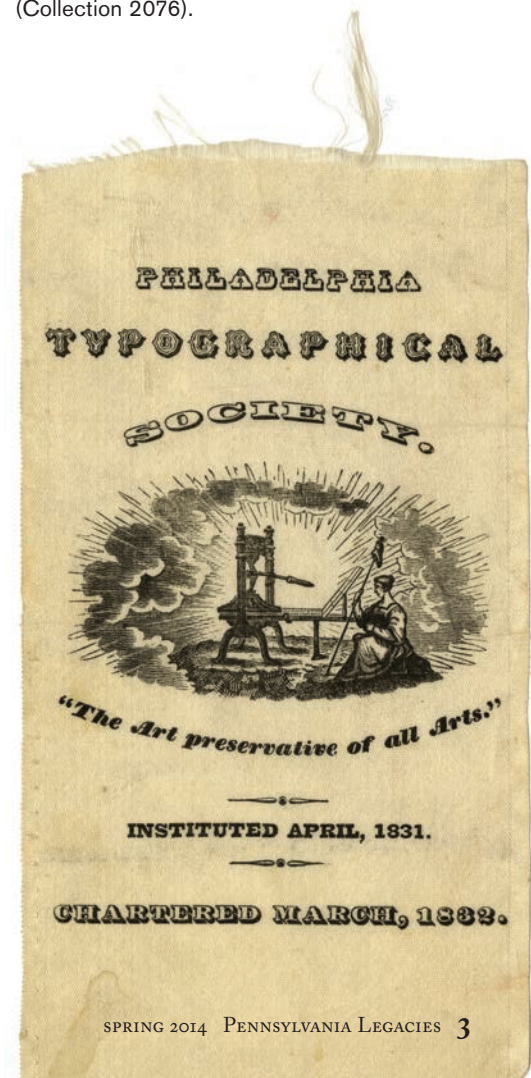
printing morning newspapers when the copy was received after 10 p.m. But by 1850, out of roughly 450 journeymen printers operating in the city, only 143 (one-third) were members of the organization operating under the scale, rendering it ineffective. Publishers were increasingly hiring unskilled printers and unorganized “two-thirders,” at lower and lower rates, a situation that threatened to drive down wages for all printers.

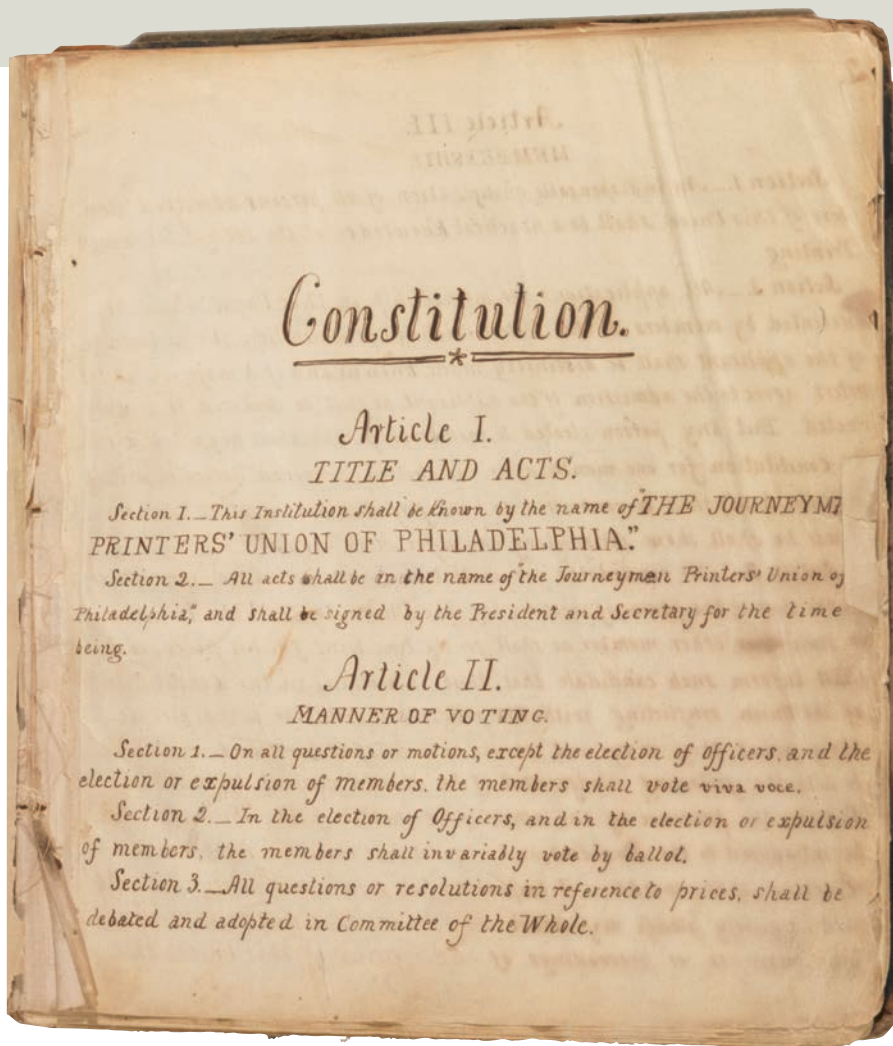
Concerned by this situation, a large group of journeymen printers gathered at the house of printer I. G. Stigman at modern-day Sansom and Sixth Streets on June 27, 1850, and resolved, “some action is imperatively necessary to improve the condition of our craft.” By July 6, 419 printers had signed an agreement to unite. On July 27, at another large meeting, printers adopted a “Declaration of Principles.” “In the present organization of society, laborers, single-handed, are powerless, and may be oppressed by their wealthy neighbors,” they reasoned, “but combined, there is no power of wrong they may not openly defy.” As such, they announced, “the *Journeymen Printers of Philadelphia* have determined to unite themselves together . . . to promote our interests, advance our moral and intellectual condition, and give weight and importance to our acts, as well as form a nucleus around which we can rally for the promotion of any object. . . . *In union there is strength.*” A committee was appointed to draft a constitution for this new union. On August 10, 1850, 189 printers signed the completed constitution to become official members of the Journeymen Printer’s Union of Philadelphia. By September 18, 425—94 percent of the city’s skilled printers—had signed on.

The union immediately adopted a new scale of prices and on September 2, 1850,



(TOP) Seal of Philadelphia Typographical Union No. 2. (BOTTOM) Ribbon commemorating the Philadelphia Typographical Society, an early organization of artisan printers that preceded the union. International Typographical Union, Local 2 (Philadelphia, Pa.) Records (Collection 2076).





Original 1850 constitution of the Journeyman Printer's Union of Philadelphia, later ITU Local 2. International Typographical Union, Local 2 (Philadelphia, Pa.) Records (Collection 2076).

went on strike—called off on December 7—in order to enforce it. The union attempted to support printers who were out of work as a result of the strike by assessing an extra fee from employed members and by commissioning temporarily unemployed printers to produce editions of *Robinson Crusoe*. Five editions and 17,000 copies were printed and sold, but the end result was a net loss of \$340 for the union even without taking into account the cost of materials. A “vigilance committee” that operated in secret was also established “to keep the Union informed of the movements of employers, and of men coming to the city to work, and to bring them into the Union if possible.” The vigilance committee provided the union with “Rat Lists” of noncompliant printers, “the reading of which was greeted with applause, and containing a full description of the ‘vermin.’” Vigilance committees and the occasional addition of names to the “Rat List” would be ongoing features of the union’s history for decades.

On December 2, 1850, the Philadelphia printers’ union met in New York City with similar unions organized in New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Kentucky in the hopes of organizing a National Typographical Union. After meeting again in Baltimore in 1851, this body held its third meeting in Cincinnati in 1852, at which the National Typographical Union was officially organized and a constitution adopted. A Philadelphia printer, M. C. Brown, was elected the union’s first president. At the next convention of the national union in 1853, local unions drew numerical lots by seniority, and the Journeymen Printers’ Union of Philadelphia was renamed the Philadelphia Typographical Union No. 2. In 1869, the National Typographical Union became the International Typographical Union (ITU)—it now included locals from Canada as well as the United States—which continued to operate long into the 20th century. When it eventually disbanded in 1987 to become

the Printing, Publishing, and Media Workers Sector of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the ITU was the oldest continuously operating union in the United States.

The International Typographical Union, Local 2 (Philadelphia, Pa.) Records at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania span from the local union’s founding in 1850 through 1967 and consist of 22 volumes and 9 boxes. The majority of these materials—90 percent, in fact—are minutes from monthly and special meetings. These meeting minutes include member reports, evolving price scales for newspapers as well as for book publishers and job printers, amendments to the union’s constitution and bylaws, reports from delegates to conventions, monthly statements and bulletins, member lists, and bills. When followed carefully, they provide great insight into the day-to-day operations of a local union as it evolved and adapted to the swift changes of the mid-19th century through the mid-20th. Through the daily business that dominates these records, interested researchers can see how the union reacted to—and, in some cases, had a hand in shaping—the Civil War, US and international copyright laws, local and far-flung strikes, immigration legislation, the New Deal, the AFL-CIO merger, the Taft-Hartley Act, and two world wars.

One gem among this collection is a book published in 1900 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Philadelphia union’s founding. Union members and officials took the opportunity represented not just by the organization’s golden anniversary but by the turn of the century to recount their own history, consider the progress of organized labor in America, and look ahead to the future.

The union’s 50 years had been tumultuous. There was much for the printers—and organized labor in general—to celebrate, including the recent implementation of an industry-wide nine-hour day, a hard-won victory after years of agitation and coordination. 1892 had seen the dedication of the completed “Union Printers Home” in Colorado Springs: a sanitarium for aged and disabled printers, established by the ITU with assistance from wealthy Philadelphians George W. Childs and Anthony J. Drexel. In the 1870s, the ITU

had become the second national trade organization to admit women members (the Samuel Gompers–led Cigarmakers Union was first). Faced with persistent calls for recognition and equality from female printers, the organization had evolved from a dismissive stance in the 1850s to admitting Women’s Typographical Local No. 1 in 1869 to electing Local 1’s Augusta Lewis as an international union official in 1871 and, in 1872, resolving “to make no invidious distinction between the male and female compositor, but to place the latter on the same footing as her male competitor.” The union had not been as progressive in its stance toward black printers. Although calls to admit African Americans to union membership were a regular feature of the union’s national conventions throughout the 1870s, the organization assiduously avoided action by tabling discussions, eventually sidestepping the issue by allowing individual unions to make their

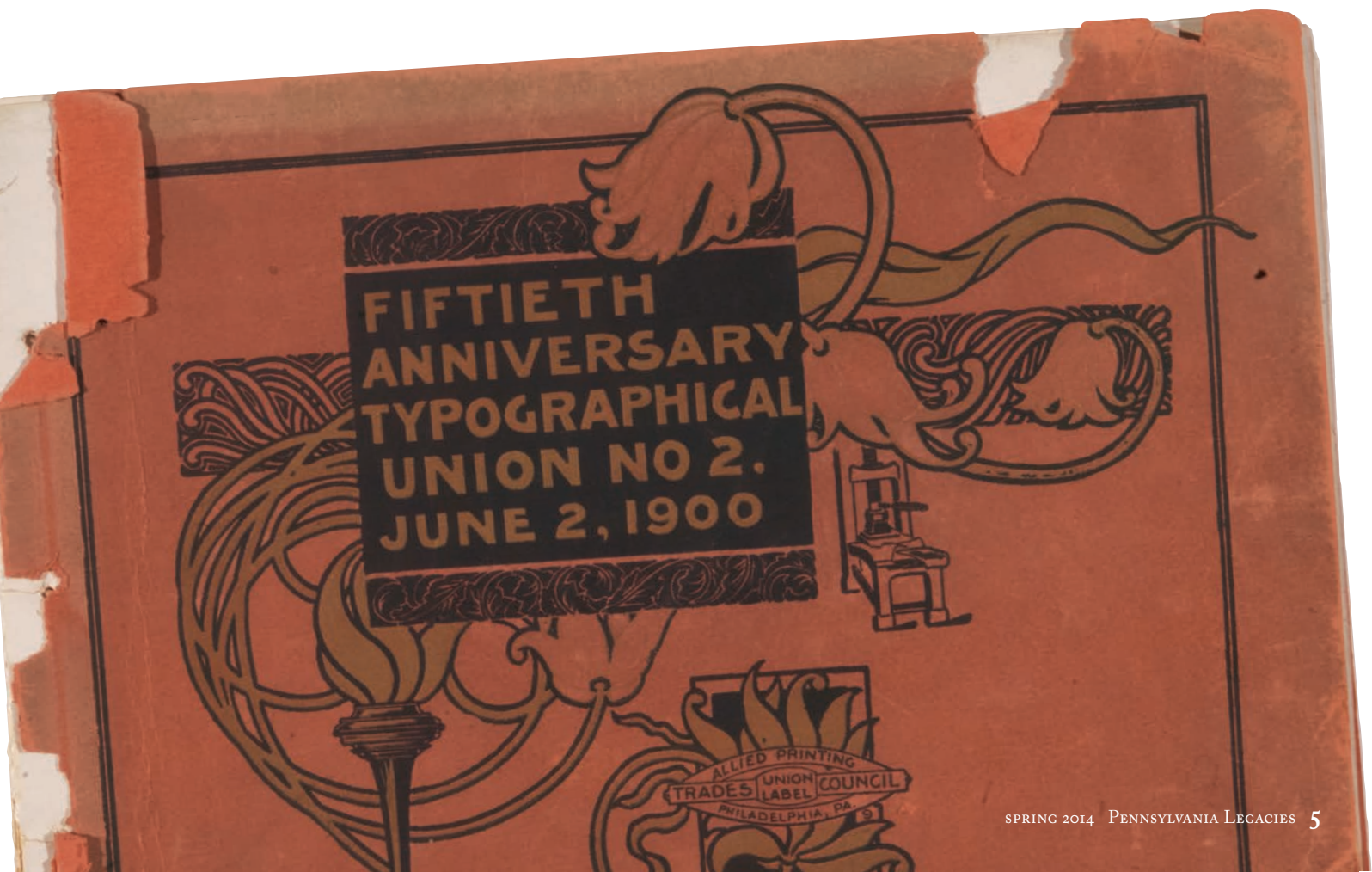
own decisions regarding admittance of African Americans.

E. S. McIntosh, president of Local 2 from 1897 through 1898, remarked that “of [the union’s] periods of adversity, the present, from which it is sincerely hoped we are about emerging, has probably been the most lengthy and trying.” Technological as well as economic and social developments challenged the printers as the 20th century dawned. In the estimation of Local 2’s then president Theodore Yarnall, “none have had more disastrous effects than the type-setting machines that are now in almost every newspaper and large book and job office in the country.” In the face of rapid technological change, as well as what Yarnall described as “the bad effects of the keen competition which is now the ruling power of the business world,” printers would have to adapt and fight hard to ensure a just place in the American economic landscape. In the view of Local 2 unionist Fred W. Long, the increasing productive capacity of technology

represented an argument for the necessity of printers to agitate for the eight-hour day: “The machine, driven by forces which the laborer has harnessed, has . . . solved forever the problem of human needs as far as production is concerned, and made possible a reasonable leisure for every human being,” he wrote, optimistically. “Every new machine should increase the time the worker is master of. If it does not do this it is a curse rather than a blessing.”

The work of Local 2 and of organized labor was clearly far from over. “All labor is restless,” Yarnall reflected, “and ever will be until that day arrives when unions cease to be a necessity, and that seems to be as far off as the millennium.” Nonetheless, he concluded with the hope that by the time the union reached its 100th birthday, “we may be able to look back upon this Golden Anniversary as the beginning of a triumphant march towards that goal which all labor unions are striving to reach. Let us ever remember that ‘In union there is strength.’” ■

Fiftieth Anniversary Typographical Union No 2. June 2, 1900. Souvenir book celebrating the 50th anniversary of the organization of the Journeymen Printers’ Union of Philadelphia. International Typographical Union, Local 2 (Philadelphia, Pa.) Records (Collection 2076).





Shoemaker.

Class Conflict and the Demise of the Artisan Order

THE CORDWAINERS' 1805 STRIKE AND 1806 CONSPIRACY TRIAL

BY BRIAN GREENBERG

During the early morning hours of July 4, 1788, Philadelphia's merchants and manufacturers, among other prominent citizens, marched in a "Grand Federal Procession" to commemorate the ratification of the Constitution. With only slight exaggeration, Dr. Benjamin Rush heralded the unity of the day: "Rank for a while forgot all its claims, and Agriculture, Commerce and Manufactures, together with the learned and mechanical Professions, seemed to acknowledge by their harmony and respect for each other, that they were all necessary to each other, and all useful in a cultivated society." As one of the 60 units of Philadelphia's crafts and trades who took part in the celebration, 300 cordwainers, or shoemakers, marched behind a carriage decorated with an image of a cordwainer's shop "in which six men [were] actually at work." Each marcher wore a white leather apron embellished by his company's arms. Almost every other major city in the United States held a similar procession to mark the occasion. On this day, few appeared to question that the United States would be a society of equal and productive free men.

Throughout the 18th century, an artisan system of production characterized the early development of manufactures in Philadelphia, as in other American seaport cities. Working by hand, masters, journeymen, and apprentices together filled orders for "bespoke," or custom-made, goods or built up small stores of goods to sell locally. At the end of the American Revolution, artisans made up at least one-half of the Quaker City's taxable population. John Bedford, Philadelphia's largest boot-and-shoe manufacturer in these years,

employed some two dozen cordwainers, who, working in ways that would have been familiar to their fathers, turned out expensive, European-style shoes inscribed on the inside with the names of their customers. As independent producers, these artisans owned their own sets of tools and lived either in the workshop or within walking distance of it. A typical master owned his own shop, at which he employed a journeyman and a few young apprentices. But the master's role in the artisan system was based on his knowledge of the craft, not on his ownership of the means of production.

Each mechanic began as an apprentice and assumed that he would one day become a master himself. Yet, instead of great wealth, the artisan's primary goal was what was known as a "competency": the attainment of an independent estate of simple comforts. The craft shop was structured like a family, and the intimate ties of the masters, journeymen, and apprentices encouraged the subordination of self-interest and a commitment to the collective well-being. As Philadelphia's cordwainers and other skilled craftsmen had asserted in a 1779 petition, "the far greater number of us have been contented to live decently," knowing that "our professions rendered us useful and necessary members of the community, proud of that rank, we aspired no higher."

By the beginning of the 1790s, economic change was transforming the artisan system of production in Philadelphia's workshops. Instead of fashioning custom-made shoes, Bedford and other up-and-coming merchant entrepreneurs were beginning to produce shoes in greater volume, offering them for sale in local retail markets or in new markets in the West Indies and in southern cities such as

(LEFT) Copperplate engraving of a shoemaker. *The Book of Trades, or, Library of the Useful Arts*, vol. 2 (White Hall, [NY?], 1807).

In November 1805, eight members of what was now called the Journeymen Boot and Shoemakers Society of Philadelphia were arrested and imprisoned, charged with forming an illegal “combination and conspiracy to raise their wages” and with restraint of trade.

Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans. To increase output and reduce the cost of labor, the merchant entrepreneurs reorganized their shops; instead of having a journeyman make the whole shoe, the work was divided into discrete tasks performed by different workers. Shoe manufacture in Philadelphia took on the essential features of a “market society” in which a worker’s labor was viewed as a commodity—valued in terms of cash and subject to the supposedly impersonal laws of the free market.

The rise of the merchant entrepreneur undermined the mutualistic social relations that had been customary in Philadelphia’s 18th-century craft shops. Whereas earlier associations established by the master craftsmen had included both masters and journeymen, masters in 1789 and the journeymen soon after organized themselves into separate associations. Regarding themselves as victims of the new workshop order, Philadelphia’s shoe workers, briefly in 1792 and then more permanently in 1794, formed a union, the Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers. In 1799, after employers rejected their wage demands, more than 100 union members “turned out” (went on strike), claiming that they could not make a living by doing “market” work at lower wages. A lengthy strike ended after both sides accepted a compromise.

By the dawn of the 19th century, Philadelphia’s journeymen cordwainers had formed a union and gone out on strike to protect themselves. Their actions reflected a moral vision that encompassed a belief in skill as a material form of property, an expectation of independence based on securing a moderate level of prosperity or competence, and an intense commitment to equality and community. Battle lines had been drawn and the stage set for a confrontation between increasingly irreconcilable forces.

Six years after their 1799 strike, journeymen cordwainers in Philadelphia again demanded wage increases and again were immediately turned down; a bitter strike ensued that lasted nearly seven weeks. According to the strikers, the shoe merchant entrepreneurs were no longer producers; instead, they had become “mere retailers” of the cordwainers’ labor, living in luxury off the workers’ output. The strike proved disastrous for the journeymen’s union. Not only were the cordwainers forced to return to work at the old rates, but some 40 members quit the society. Of even greater consequence, the merchant entrepreneurs, aggrieved by what they saw as more than 15 years of constant struggle, moved to suppress the journeymen’s association through the courts. In November 1805, 8 members of what was now called the Journeymen Boot and Shoemakers Society of Philadelphia were arrested and imprisoned, charged with forming an illegal “combination and conspiracy to raise their wages” and with restraint of trade. The indictment claimed that the defendants

had attempted to exact “great sums of money” from their employers by refusing to work “at the usual prices and rates,” by forming themselves into a club and making “unlawful and arbitrary by-laws,” and by using threats and other unlawful means to prevent their fellow craftsmen from working. *Commonwealth v. Pullis* (1806) would be one of a dozen conspiracy cases that would undermine not only the cordwainers’ union but the early labor movement as a whole over the next two decades.

The conspiracy trial against the cordwainers began in Philadelphia in March 1806. Prominent lawyer politicians from the city’s contending political parties represented the two sides in the dispute. Jared Ingersoll and Joseph Hopkinson, both ardent Federalists, served for the prosecution, and Walter Franklin and Caesar Rodney, staunch Jeffersonians, argued for the defense. Hopkinson’s opening remarks made clear to the jury that the journeymen “are not indicted for regulating their own individual wages, but for undertaking by combination to regulate the price of labour of others as well as their own.” This he branded coercion. The first witness, the shoe worker Job Harrison, testified that a journeyman’s failure to join the workingmen’s association and abide by its rules would lead to his being “scabb’d”: the other shoe workers “would not work in the same shop, nor board or lodge in the same house, nor would they work at all for the same employer.” Hopkinson condemned such rules as acts of a “secret association” that were clearly “injurious to the general welfare.” When a spectator called out “a scab is a shelter for lice,” he was fined \$10 for contempt of court.

The prosecution quickly identified where it believed the general interest lay. Hopkinson appealed to the jury—which included two innkeepers, a merchant, two grocers, a tobacconist, a watchmaker, and a master tailor—to remember that Philadelphia “is a large, encreasing, manufacturing city.” “It is then proper,” he told them, “to support this manufacture. Will you permit men to destroy it, who have no permanent stake in the city?” In the view of the prosecution, right-thinking members of the community—those with a stake in its continued well-being—needed to come together to end this threat to the city’s economic prosperity and punish the conspirators. Hopkinson even suggested that in acting to hold down wages, the city’s merchant manufacturers were serving the interests of the community by keeping the price of goods low. For Hopkinson, only the needs of the employer, as the property owner, and not those of the laborer who actually produced the material objects, were worthy of consideration.

The defense, of course, had a different view of where the community welfare rested. Seeking to determine the rate “at which the journeymen should work,” and without consulting “the



Engraving of a shoemaker. Hannah More, *The Two Shoemakers* (Philadelphia, 1797). Courtesy of The Library Company of Philadelphia.

wishes of the workmen,” the “*would-be masters* had united against them,” according to defense counsel Franklin. The journeymen had freely united to resist “this state of slavish subordination.” In a public address during the strike, the journeymen had pointed out that they had assembled for the last 15 years “in a peaceable manner for our common good.” By such acts as assisting “those that age may [have] rendered incapable of labor,” the cordwainers’ association helped “to promote the happiness of the individuals of which our little community is composed.” No person, the defense claimed, had been compelled to join the society. Rather, the journeymen had joined together as free agents on behalf of their collective self-interest.

Rodney challenged Hopkinson’s characterization of the journeymen cordwainers as mere “birds of passage” who had no stake in society. He called on the members of the community represented by the jury to recognize that labor, too, had social value. It was labor, he insisted, that constituted “the real wealth of the country.” All that the journeymen had done by

submitting a list of wages that they believed they should be paid was commit “the unpardonable sin of setting and ascertaining the price of their own worth.” To “establish the principle, that laborers or journeymen, in every trade, are to submit to the prices which their employers, in the plenitude of their power choose to give them” would be “to destroy the free agency of this meritorious part of the community.” Rodney’s point about who should set the price of labor was made even more bluntly in Philadelphia’s *Aurora* by the newspaper’s radical democratic editor William Duane, who charged the employers with attempting to reduce the city’s laboring men to a “breed of *white slaves*” forced to live in “a condition still more despicable and abject.” The best method for advancing Philadelphia’s manufactures, Rodney assured the jurors, would be “to secure to workmen the inestimable privilege of fixing the price of their labour.” It was as producers that they voiced their collective best interests, and it was on this assumption that the defendants rested their claim to consideration by the community.

The 1806 cordwainers' conspiracy trial ended in defeat for the eight journeymen shoe workers. On the morning of March 28, the clerk read the jury's verdict: "We find the defendants guilty of a combination to raise their wages." Although the actual punishment meted out by the jury was mild—the defendants were fined eight dollars each and the costs of the suit—the guilty verdict meant that although workers could still join together to provide benefits for each other, they could not legally attempt to determine who would be able to work in a specific trade or to set the price of their labor.

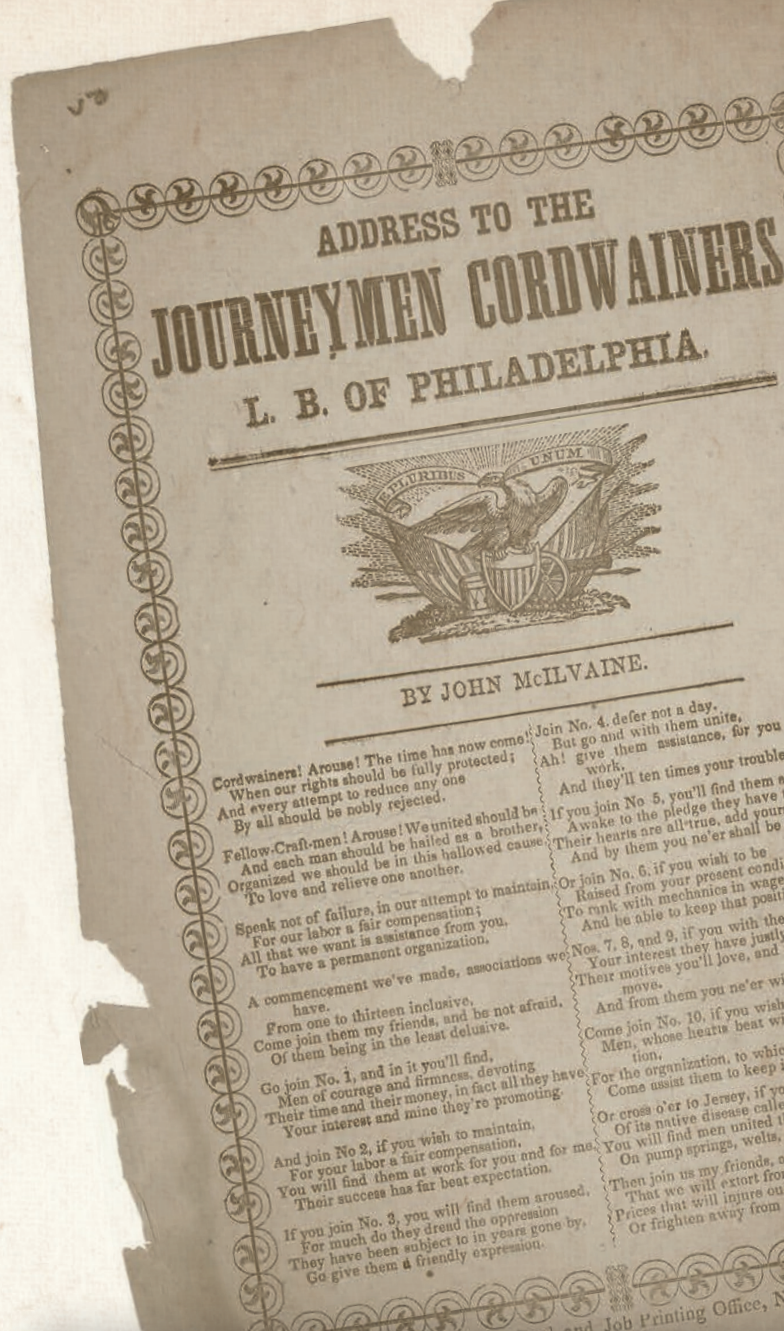
On April 28, 1806, "the Journeyman Cordwainers, of the city of Philadelphia," announced that they were opening a warehouse where they intended to carry on a boot-and-shoe business, wholesale and retail, on their own. The shoe workers told the public that they had determined that rather than submit to employers "who could take away or lessen their wages whenever their caprice or avarice might prompt them," they would go into business for themselves. Despite the cordwainers' high hopes for their cooperative, as far as is known the venture was not a success.

Workers' efforts to gain control over their labor persisted long after the end of the cordwainers' strike of 1805 and the conspiracy trial that followed. From their formation of the first unions, workers had developed a culture of opposition that looked to rally the "producing classes" against what, starting in the 1830s, was frequently vilified as "wages slavery," or the notion that wage labor was becoming a permanent and inferior condition in the nation. At least through the 19th century, workers' moral vision expressed an intense commitment to equality and community and the conviction that the social utility of labor should result in a moderate prosperity, or competence, for all Americans.

Organizing themselves into a union, striking, and seeking to gain control over their own labor through cooperative production was grounded in the cordwainers' rejection of the shoe merchant entrepreneur's conception of labor as a commodity. From the cordwainers' perspective, each shoe worker had property rights in the goods produced by the labor of his hands. The cordwainers' moral vision of a producers' republic encompassed an alternative understanding of labor and property under capitalism, one that went beyond an expectation of decency and fair play in the relations of production to envision a system of capital ownership in the United States in which there was "no hire at all."

The case of the Philadelphia cordwainers raised the question for many Americans of whether a political democracy based on the equality of each citizen could coexist with an economy divided into the opposing and unequal forces of capital and labor. Even though Philadelphia's cordwainers' strike in 1805 and trial of 1806 ended in defeat for the cordwainers, workers would be able to forge a local and national labor movement that during the 19th century held out the promise of a more equitable and cooperative industrial society. ■

Brian Greenberg, a professor of history at Monmouth University, is an expert on labor and social history. His most recent publications include (with Linda Watts) Social History of the United States: The 1900s and (with Leon Fink) Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: 1199SEIU and the Politics of Health Care Unionism. He is currently writing a history of labor from 1787 to 1877.



1802 Mr. Frederick Schinckel to A. Logan
 much the pair shoes sold and kept for Boy — 03 —
 April 24 1 pair Do — Do — for Do — 03 —
 " " 1 pair shoes kept for self — 01 —
 May 28 1 pair of shoes sold for Girl — 03 —
 June 2 1 pair Boy shoes — 04 —
 C. J. Schinckel

(TOP) John McIlvaine, "Address to the Journeymen Cordwainers L.B. of Philadelphia," [185?], shows that cordwainers continued to fight for control of their own labor long after the conspiracy trial. Courtesy of Printed Ephemera Collection, Library of Congress. (BOTTOM) Bill from Frederick Schinckel to A. Logan for preparing footwear, 1802. Historical Society of Pennsylvania Autograph Collection.

The Trial of the Journeymen Boot & Shoemakers of Philadelphia

OPENING ARGUMENT OF MR. HOPKINSON, FOR THE PLAINTIFFS

This prosecution has been commenced, not from any private pique, or personal resentment, but solely, with a view, to promote the common good of the community: and to prevent in future the pernicious combinations, of misguided men, to effect purposes not only injurious to themselves, but mischievous to society. . . .

Let it be well understood that the present action, is not intended to introduce the doctrine, that a man is not at liberty to fix any price whatsoever upon his own labour: we disclaim the idea, in the most unqualified terms, we declare that every man, has a right to fix any price upon his commodities or his labour which he deems proper. . . . If any one of the defendants, had thought proper to charge 100\$ for making a pair of boots, nobody would interfere, if he could get his employer to give it, or could compel the payment. He would have a legal right to do so, our complaint is not of that kind.

Our position is, that no man is at liberty to combine, conspire, confederate, and unlawfully agree to regulate the whole body of workmen in the city. The defendants are not indicted for regulating their own individual wages, but for undertaking by a combination, to regulate the price of the labour of others as well as their own. . . .

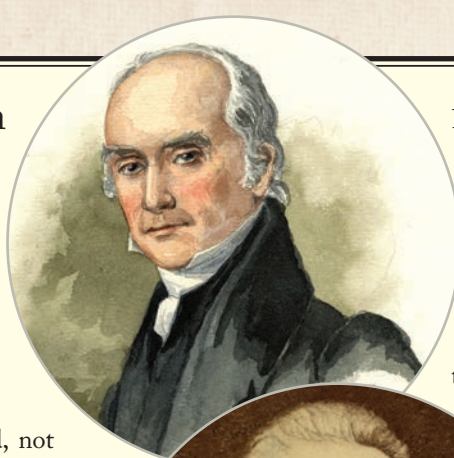
You will also please to observe that this body of journeymen are not an *incorporated society* . . . ; neither are they a society instituted for benevolent purposes. But merely a society for compelling by the most arbitrary and malignant means, the whole body of journeymen to submit to their rules and regulations; it is not confined even to the members of the society, it reaches every individual of the trade, whether journeymen or master. . . .

There may be a number of young single-men, who may stand out for the wages required, but there are others with families who cannot subsist without work; these men are compelled to abstain from their employments, and are reduced to the extreme of misery, by the tyranny of the others, we shall shew you, that some journeymen, with families, have been forbid to work at prices with which they were perfectly satisfied, and thereby been brought into deep distress. . . .

This is the chief charge in the indictment; and you now see that the action is instituted to maintain the cause of liberty and repress that of licentiousness. It is to secure the rights of each individual to obtain and enjoy the price he fixes upon his own labour.

OPENING ARGUMENT OF MR. FRANKLIN, FOR THE DEFENDANTS

The defendants, with a number of other persons, who go under the denomination of journeymen shoemakers, are members of an association, called "the federal society of journeymen cordwainers," which has been established in this city for a considerable time past.



For fifteen years and more, the members of that society, have been accustomed to the enjoyment of the privilege secured to them and all other citizens, by the constitution of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to assemble together in a peaceable manner for their common good. The objects, of their thus uniting, and meeting together, were the advancement of their mutual interests; the relief of the distressed, and indigent members; and, generally, to promote the happiness of the individuals, of which their society was composed. . . .

But, unfortunately for these poor and ignorant men! they went a step beyond this! They mistook their privilege! they thought they had a right, to determine for themselves the value of their own labour! and among other acts of their association, committed the unpardonable sin of settling and ascertaining the price of their own work!!!

If this offence, against the master workmen were really an offence against the laws of their country, how were these journeymen to know it? they know, that their *would-be-masters*, had united against them; they had set the example of combining, and confederating together. They had their meetings, and passed their resolutions; they had joined all their forces: not for the purpose only of establishing the prices of their own goods; but also, for the purpose of determining the rate, at which the journeymen should work. . . .

To this state of slavish subordination, the journeymen refused to submit. They conceived that every man being the sole owner, and master of his own goods and labour, had a right to affix the price of them; leaving to those who were to employ or purchase, the right to accept or reject as they might think proper. . . .

The journeymen have repeatedly, since, manifested their willingness to enter into an amicable explanation, and have had frequent meetings for that purpose. They have always been ready to shew, and on the present occasion, are prepared to prove, that independently of the right to fix the value of their own work, their demands were highly reasonable, and ought to have been acceded to by the master workmen. . . .

These circumstances, had no weight with the employers, they continued *their united* opposition, and the journeymen, in self defence, were *compelled* to resort to the measures which they adopted, and to continue them as long as the pecuniary situation of themselves and families would permit. . . .

These were the measures, however, for which the defendants were arrested, and committed to jail! These are the grounds, on which an *oath* was taken by some of the prosecutors, of a *dangerous conspiracy* against *their interests*, and those of the *community at large*. ■

Thomas Lloyd, comp., The Trial of the Boot & Shoemakers of Philadelphia, on an Indictment for a Combination and Conspiracy to Raise Their Wages (*Philadelphia, 1806*), *excerpt*.

(TOP) Watercolor portrait of Joseph Hopkinson, copied from a painting by Thomas Sully. David McNeely Stauffer Collection.
(BOTTOM) Carte de visite portrait from a painting of Walter Franklin. Historical Society of Pennsylvania Portrait Collection.



INDUSTRIAL CITIZENSHIP



INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

IN PENNSYLVANIA STEEL,
1910-42

BY PERRY K. BLATZ

The Homestead riot, drawn by W. P. Snyder after a photograph by Dabbs, Pittsburg. Illustration in Harper's Weekly, July 16, 1892. Courtesy of Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

The dawn of the 20th century brought with it the creation of the world's first billion-dollar corporation: United States Steel. The steel industry stood as the foremost example of American industrial dominance and technological innovation, yet its success rested on the backbreaking unskilled labor performed by hundreds of thousands of workers, largely immigrants from rural eastern and southern Europe. For these laborers, the promise of American democracy was little more than a mirage as they confronted a regimen of authoritarian workplace and community control. During the strike of 1919, steelworkers struggled—unsuccessfully—to challenge that control. The Great Depression of the 1930s, however, altered the terms of the struggle, enabling workers to form a union that overturned steel's suffocating hierarchy.

The top priority of millions of immigrants to industrial America had always been steady work, and, except during economic downturns, the steel industry provided that—but at great cost. At a time when most Americans worked 9- or 10-hour days, most steelworkers labored for 12 hours a day, seven days a week, amid intense heat, noise, and danger. From July 1906 through June 1907, 195 workers lost their lives in steel mills in Allegheny County and far more incurred injuries. Through this, they were lucky to make 15¢ an hour—not nearly enough to support growing families.

In 1910, more than half of the nation's iron and steel workers were in Pennsylvania, and two-thirds of them lived in the steel towns of western Pennsylvania, with Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, Croatians, Ruthenians, Italians, and Serbs the most prominent ethnic groups. The men who ran the industry saw these workers as expendable, like the equipment they so readily replaced to cut costs. Unskilled labor was a commodity on the world market, subject to the same forces of supply and demand as

steel itself. The success of the steel companies flowed from their control not just of the workplace but of their workers' communities through their influence over churches, small businesses, and local governments. With victory in the Homestead Strike of 1892, the companies had practically driven unionism out of steel, defeating the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers (AAISTW), a union dominated by skilled Americans. By the 1910s, the steel industry could not imagine surrendering that control to any union, certainly not one populated by the foreigners who dominated their workforce. Bosses fostered a climate of fear, encouraging workers to spy on each other and firing anyone who talked about a union.

In April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson called for Americans to make the world "safe for democracy" by entering the First World War. As steelworkers were called on to increase production for the war effort, they could not help but reflect on their need for democracy at home. Heightened demand for labor gave workers bargaining power, spurring the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to organize new groups of workers. In August 1918, the AFL established the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers. The committee's organizers saw the most enthusiastic response from immigrants and their sons, who had been energized by the patriotic fervor of the war to assert their own claim to industrial citizenship. The steel industry tried to counter the labor organizers' success by portraying the National Committee's work as a radical, un-American effort directed at foreigners. They bitterly attacked the committee's secretary-treasurer, William Z. Foster, who, after a youth spent in Philadelphia's slums, had risen to prominence when he led a successful drive in 1917 and 1918 to unionize meatpacking workers. During the steel drive, journalists revealed his radical writings and onetime membership in the militantly anticapitalist Industrial Workers of the World.



The National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers had only begun to organize when the First World War came to an end on November 11, 1918. Despite vigorous efforts by the steel companies to discourage organizing, immigrant and first-generation American steelworkers were eager to challenge their bosses through a strike. In July 1919, the committee presented its demands for a contract. Among various stipulations, it called for the reinstatement of workers who had been fired for union activity; standard wage scales for similar jobs across the industry; double pay for overtime; one day off per week; an eight-hour workday; and collection of union dues through company payrolls. Committee representatives tried to arrange a meeting with Elbert H. Gary, chairman of US Steel and the acknowledged leader of the American steel industry. Gary refused. Labor leaders next called on President Wilson to persuade Gary to meet with the committee. The president's request failed, and the committee called on all steelworkers to strike on September 22.

From Colorado to eastern Pennsylvania, some 300,000 steelworkers—more than one-half of the steel workforce—left their jobs. Unskilled recent immigrants and their sons displayed the greatest loyalty to the walkout. The strike was strong around Chicago and in northeastern Ohio, but, with the notable exception of

Johnstown, it was not as strong in western Pennsylvania mill towns. Local officials, beholden to the steel bosses for their jobs, generally banned strike-related meetings. Police and sheriff's deputies, aided by the Pennsylvania State Police, prevented groups from gathering and harassed anyone they thought might be supporting the strike.

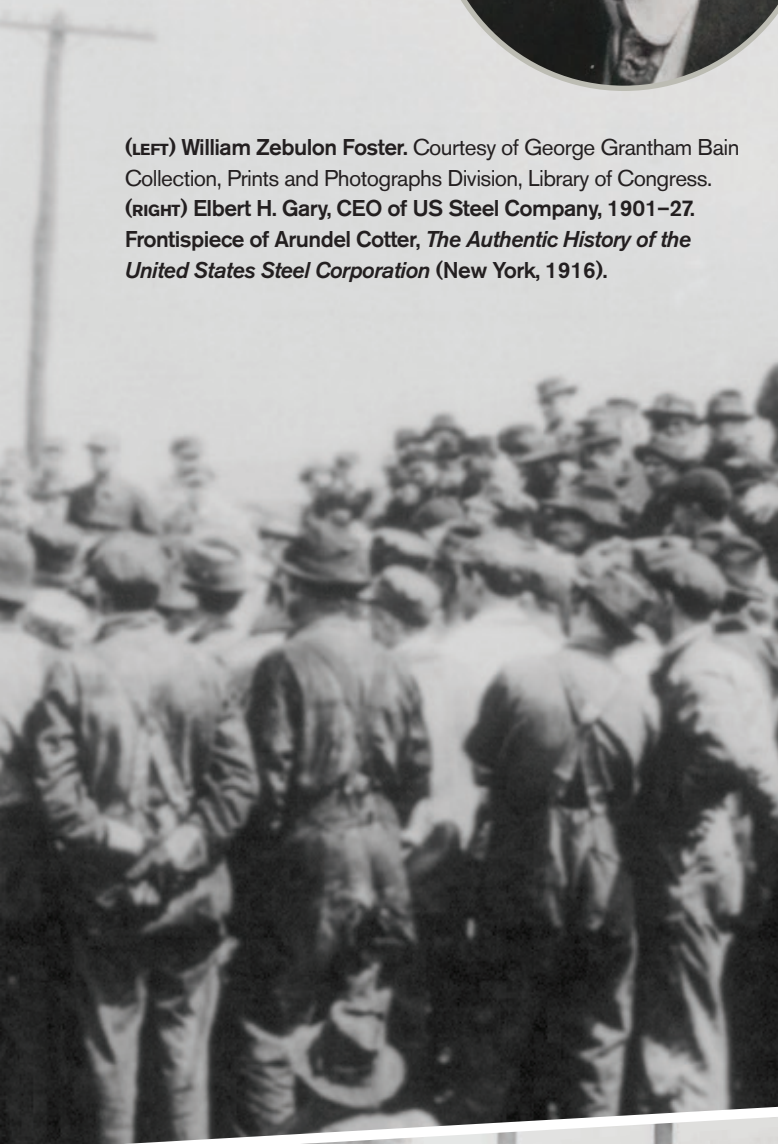
Repression extended to basic denial of civil liberties. George Kuretko of Homestead, Pennsylvania, a US citizen and longtime employee of the Carnegie Steel Company, was given a union handbill walking home on September 28. He looked at it and passed it on to another man, who, a few minutes later, pointed Kuretko out to a company official, who had him arrested. Kuretko was jailed overnight and fined \$13.60 for "throwing bills on the streets." In Donora at the end of October, William Tokos was jailed for a day and a half and fined \$17.25 for "laughing at the State Police." In driving even women and children off the streets, the Pennsylvania State Police earned the epithet "Cossacks" from those who remembered Tsarist repression.

The steel companies would ultimately win the propaganda campaign. Local newspapers overwhelmingly supported the companies and offered little information on the conditions steelworkers faced. Reporters undercounted the number of workers





(LEFT) William Zebulon Foster. Courtesy of George Grantham Bain Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.
(RIGHT) Elbert H. Gary, CEO of US Steel Company, 1901–27. Frontispiece of Arundel Cotter, *The Authentic History of the United States Steel Corporation* (New York, 1916).



who struck, exaggerated the number of laborers who returned to work, and continued to emphasize Foster's past and nurture fears of radicalism, striking a chord with many Americans who were concerned about Russian Bolshevism and other major strikes throughout 1919.

Newspapers also trumpeted reports of strike-related violence, many of which were later disproved. Some violence was provoked by antistrike action, such as when vigilantes in Johnstown drove Foster out of the city before he could address strikers on November 7. In Donora in December, reports of an explosion brought the state police, who arrested 98 in the town's strike headquarters and closed the strikers' soup kitchen. More violence broke out when strikers confronted tens of thousands of African American workers—traditionally denied jobs in steel—who had been hired as strikebreakers.

Workers at many mills maintained the strike well into November, but in the face of continued intransigence from the steel companies, there was no prospect of a settlement. After the companies rebuffed mediation, the National Committee gave up the strike on January 9, 1920.

The strikers had not prevailed, but the strike had illuminated how the steel industry could be unionized. The committee had sought to organize workers across the industry, without regard to craft or occupation. Most importantly, workers—especially the unskilled—had confronted their bosses in a mass strike, gaining a new experience in solidarity and forging their own version of Americanism. The industry prospered during the 1920s, ending the 12-hour day and seven-day week. To discourage unionization, the steel companies also began providing benefits to their employees—from pensions and profit-sharing plans for long-term employees to recreational programs. A few steel companies even offered workers a voice in the workplace by electing delegates to raise grievances with management through “employee representation plans.”

After the stock market crash of 1929, however, the Great Depression transformed the terms under which American industry operated. While unemployment across Pennsylvania neared 40 percent by the end of 1932, steel production fell by three-quarters and workers' earnings by almost one-half, with the worst burdens falling on the unskilled. Some major corporations, such as US Steel, tried to limit wage reductions and layoffs as long as they could and implemented programs for work-sharing. But this cut back workers' hours so much that few could support their families. Companies also let workers fall behind on their rent in company homes and provided food baskets; this limited help, however, was generally given with the understanding that the workers would eventually pay the companies back. As the Depression persisted, workers understood all too clearly that their employers could not make them secure.

(LEFT SPREAD) Steel workers listening to a speaker as a strike looms, 1919. **(LEFT)** State troopers prepared to be called to control striking workers, Farrell, Pennsylvania, 1919. Courtesy of National Photo Company Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

The federal government showed a new level of support for unionization as it worked to combat the unprecedented economic collapse through President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 gave workers "the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing" and prohibited companies from taking reprisals against workers who exercised that right. This provision, along with a modest economic upturn, unleashed a massive movement toward unionization. To give their workers an alternative, most steel companies that had not previously set up employee representation plans did so—US Steel among them.

Suspicion of any step that might encourage unionism remained strong. When Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins came to a meeting in Homestead to discuss the Recovery Act, she learned that a local official had excluded workers from the meeting. She suggested an open meeting at a nearby park, but the official refused. Perkins was forced to move the meeting to federal property—the post office—in order to reach anyone interested in speaking to her. Thousands of steelworkers streamed to the woefully unprepared AAISTW, which was still struggling on the fringes of the industry. In 1934, those workers pushed for militant demands and threatened to strike. Concerned that a strike in steel would sabotage hopes for recovery, the Roosevelt administration appointed a steel labor board to review grievances, sidetracking militancy for a while.

The growing ranks of militant steelworkers looked for another way to win real representation. They asserted themselves within their employee representation plans, making demands well beyond any the companies had envisioned while strategizing among various plants and across regions to confront their bosses more effectively. Meanwhile, passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in July 1935 offered an unprecedented opportunity for organizing that would split the labor movement. To guarantee workers' rights, the NLRA prohibited antiunion intimidation by employers and established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to rule on representation elections and disputes. The traditionally dominant craft unions of the AFL had long insisted on claiming workers of similar crafts, regardless of the industry in which they worked. The AFL's relatively few industrial unions, such as the United Mine Workers (UMW), saw this approach as impractical for organizing mass-production industries such as steel and demanded single unions for each industry without respect to craft. When the AFL rejected that demand, UMW president John L. Lewis and his fellow industrial unionists established the Committee on Industrial Organization (CIO) in October 1935. The AFL labeled this initiative traitorous dual unionism and expelled the unions that had formed the committee, but the CIO would proceed to organize steelworkers, autoworkers, electrical workers, and millions of others on an industry-wide basis.

Pressure mounted on US Steel, by far the largest steelmaker. Militants intensified their demands in the company's employee representation meetings. Early in June 1936, the CIO persuaded the AAISTW to be superseded by the newly established Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC). That organization, largely funded by the UMW and led by longtime UMW official Philip Murray, began to organize steelworkers. Over the next few months, SWOC worked to win over the delegates of the employee representation plans, while US Steel tried to retain their loyalty with various concessions. Workers however, saw the logic in SWOC's claim that those concessions would not have been offered without



Promotional Pamphlet of the American Iron and Steel Institute

BENEFITS OF COOPERATION

The primary objects of capital, management and labor in industry are identical. Each group seeks to get out of industry a suitable return for what it puts into industry.

Labor seeks a wage. Management seeks a salary. Capital seeks a return on its investment.

Each of the three groups is dependent upon increased output and increased efficiency for possible increases in its share of the income from the sale of the goods produced.

When orders are ample, prices fair and the mills are busy, there is likely to be an adequate return to everybody. But no industry can thrive when there is no business. To pay wages on the American scale, to provide decent hours and working conditions, an industry must enjoy a profitable market and true cooperation between employer and worker.

The continued existence of an industry is dependent upon such cooperation. Without it there can be only failure for capital and unemployment for management and labor.

In the steel industry such a fortunate relationship has, on the whole, existed over a long period. Even during the years of depression both the workers and management in the steel industry have preferred cooperation to friction, and friendship to hostility, which, after all, is the American method of industrial relations. In a country and in an industry where workingmen may move into management, a classless society develops which recognizes equality of economic opportunity. In the steel industry there always has been, and there is now, opportunity for capable men to rise to the top.

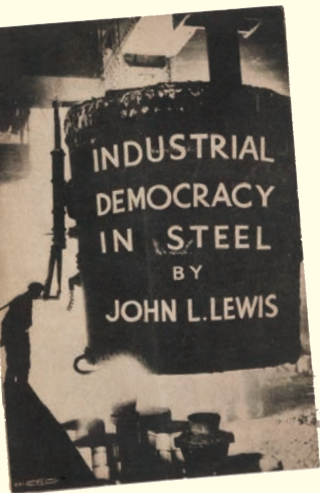
Before the cost of organizing and equipping the larger industrial units involved such huge outlays of capital, the proprietor of an enterprise worked alongside his employees and an intimate social as well as economic relationship existed. In the larger enterprise, such intimate personal relations now have become more difficult. Nevertheless, after a period of transition, the steel industry can point to the fact that management and labor have worked cooperatively to restore the advantages of direct personal contact while preserving the advantages of the large scale operations inevitable in our civilization.

In every period of serious economic distress, men appear who utilize such a time to stimulate strife, to attack the motives of every constructive act by industrialists, to agitate for the hasty repudiation of an economic system which has been slowly evolved by study and experience.

Such men appeal to workers to reject the known and try the unknown. They suggest a perfection which has been the aspiration of mankind for centuries without indicating realistically how such perfection can be attained.

Fortunately, for the United States, labor, as well as management, has sought the slower but inevitably surer process of collective cooperation. And it is this process which has played so important a role in producing upon the American continent the highest standard of living known to man. ■

American Iron and Steel Institute, The Men Who Make Steel (New York, 1936), excerpt.



Radio Address of John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers and chairman of the Committee for (later Congress of) Industrial Organizations

**STEEL INSTITUTE
VIOLATES LAW**

The American Iron and Steel Institute last week published a full-page advertisement in 375 newspapers, at an estimated cost of one-half million of dollars. Its purpose was to justify the outmoded labor policy of the Institute and to announce the determination of the steel corporations to oppose the campaign now in progress for the organization of the workers in the iron and steel industry. That statement is sinister in its implications; it is designed to be terrifying to the minds of those who fail to accept the theory that the financial interests behind the steel corporations shall be regarded as the omnipresent overlords of industrial America. That statement amounts to a declaration of industrial and civil war.

It contravenes the law! It pledges the vast resources of the industry against the right of its workers to engage in self-organization or modern collective bargaining. . . .

INSTITUTE SPEAKS FOR ORGANIZED INDUSTRY

The American Iron and Steel Institute boasts that it includes ninety-five per cent of the steel production of the country and represents an associate corporate investment of \$5,000,000,000. This gigantic financial and industrial combination announces that its members "are ready to employ their resources to the full" to prevent the independent organization of their employees. It contravenes the law!

It may be admitted that the corporations associated in this Institute speak with one voice. In the so-called competitive bidding of these combinations on government contracts, it has repeatedly appeared that prices submitted were uniform even to the third decimal. . . . And now the Institute has undertaken to voice for its members a common policy in dealing with all the workers in the industry.

It is idle to moralize over the abstract relations between an employer and his employee. This is an issue between an industry clearly organized on its management side and the 500,000 men upon whose toil the whole structure depends. The question is whether these men shall have freedom of organization for the purpose of protecting their interest in this colossal economic organism.

COMPANIES INTERFERE AND COERCE

The Institute says that it favors the right of organization among its employees without coercion from any source. What coercion can the representatives of organized labor exert upon the workers in these plants, and what appeal can they make to them except the appeal that they bring themselves within the organized labor movement for their own protection and for the common good of those who toil? . . .

Interference and coercion of employees trying to organize, comes from the economic advantages held by the employer. In the steel industry it is manifested in an elaborate system of spies, and in a studied discharge of those who advocate any form of organization displeasing to management. It is shown by confining all yearning for organization to make-believe company unions, controlled and dominated by the management itself. . . .

These company unions are pious pretexts for denying the steel workers the right of organization. . . .

JOIN WITH THE C. I. O.!

Organized labor in America accepts the challenge of the omnipresent overlords of steel to fight for the prize of economic freedom and industrial democracy. . . .

I call upon the workers in the iron and steel industry who are listening to me tonight to throw off their shackles of servitude and join the union of their industry. . . . ■

John L. Lewis, Industrial Democracy in Steel (Washington, DC, 1936), excerpt.

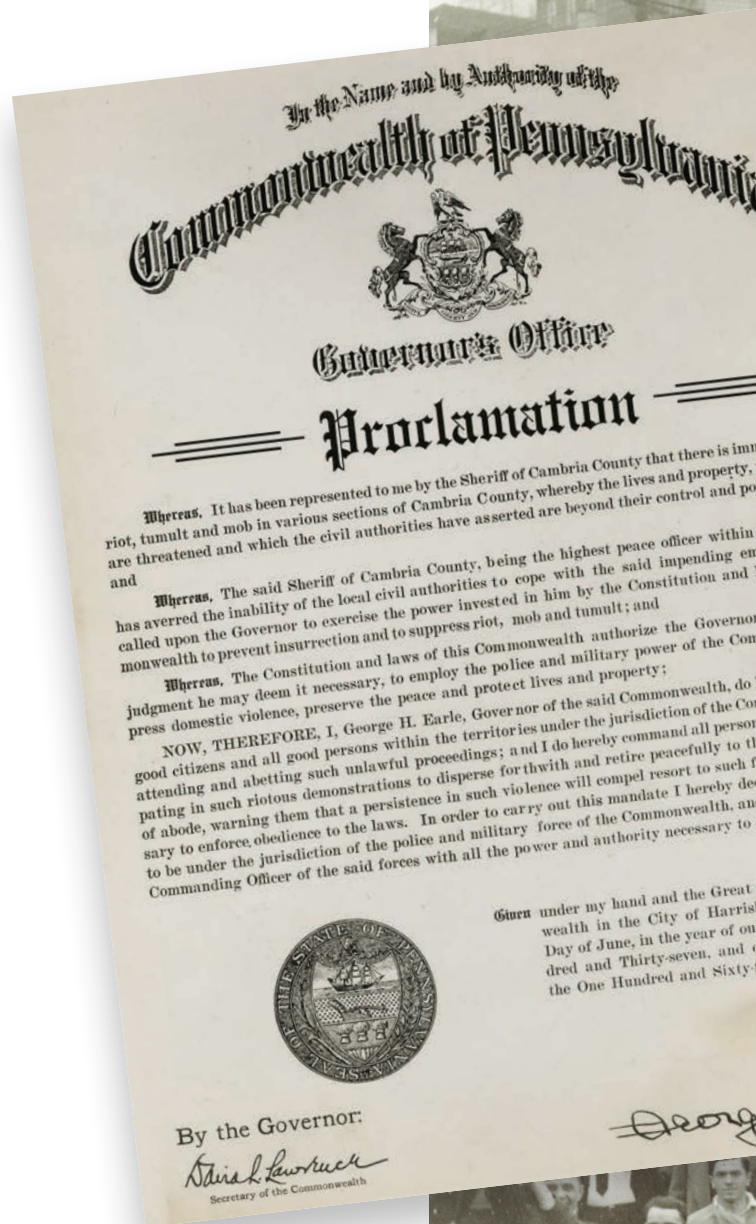
the pressure for unionization. Nor could steel companies rely on local and state officials, as they had in 1919, to drive organizers from the mill towns or stop SWOC's rallies. Democratic Party victories across western Pennsylvania in the wake of the New Deal brought to power officials who had little sympathy for the companies.

Struggling to revive its business after massive losses caused by the Depression, US Steel had no easy options. A changed society would no longer allow the company to confront workers with the arrogant antiunionism it had inherited from Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick. Just as important, it faced a new generation of workers, toughened by the Depression and determined to assert their citizenship. Led by pragmatic financier Myron Taylor rather than the late Judge Gary, US Steel shocked both its friends and foes by signing a contract with SWOC on March 2, 1937. The contract provided substantial wage increases, recognition of a standard eight-hour day and 40-hour week, a week's paid vacation for all employees with five years' service, and a procedure to settle grievances.

Although many firms would follow US Steel and reach an agreement with SWOC without a fight, a number of major firms resisted in ways reminiscent of 1919. In 1934, officials at Jones & Laughlin went so far as to arrange for a former worker to be committed to a mental institution when he was caught organizing. After passage of the NLRA, that company persisted in firing workers for union activity and refused to abide by the NLRB decision to reinstate the men. Hoping to invalidate the NLRA, Jones & Laughlin took its case to the US Supreme Court, but the court upheld the act by a vote of five to four on April 12, 1937. Company leaders then met with SWOC, but did not sign a contract until after a brief strike in May and an NLRB election in which workers selected SWOC by more than two to one. Later that month, SWOC struck the so-called "Little Steel" companies, including Pennsylvania's Bethlehem Steel, the industry's second-largest firm. But these companies maintained sufficient community and worker support to weaken the strike, and SWOC abandoned the walkout by early July. Bethlehem Steel would continue to resist the union and fight NLRB rulings, only signing a contract with SWOC in March 1941.

The end of that year brought the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into World War II. War demanded steel and the labor peace essential to produce it. Philip Murray, who had become president of the CIO as well as SWOC, joined other union leaders in pledging not to strike for the duration of the war. In return, the government required, at companies already covered by union contracts, both the collection of union dues by employers and automatic enrollment of new workers in unions. This would expand and secure unionism in steel and other mass-production industries well beyond the war. Adopting the name United Steelworkers of America in May 1942, the union would serve as a powerful voice for workers across Pennsylvania and the nation, constituting a democratic counterweight to corporate power throughout the 20th century. ■

Perry Blatz worked as a professor specializing in American industrial history for 26 years before his retirement last year. He is the author of Democratic Miners: Work and Labor Relations in the Anthracite Coal Industry, 1875–1925, and a co-author of Keystone of Democracy: A History of Pennsylvania Workers.



(TOP) Proclamation by Governor George H. Earle placing Johnstown under martial law, June 19, 1937. Philadelphia Record Photograph Collection. (RIGHT) Celebration of the end of the strike against the Jones & Laughlin Steel Company in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, May 14, 1937. Philadelphia Record Photograph Collection.



minent danger of
peace and safety
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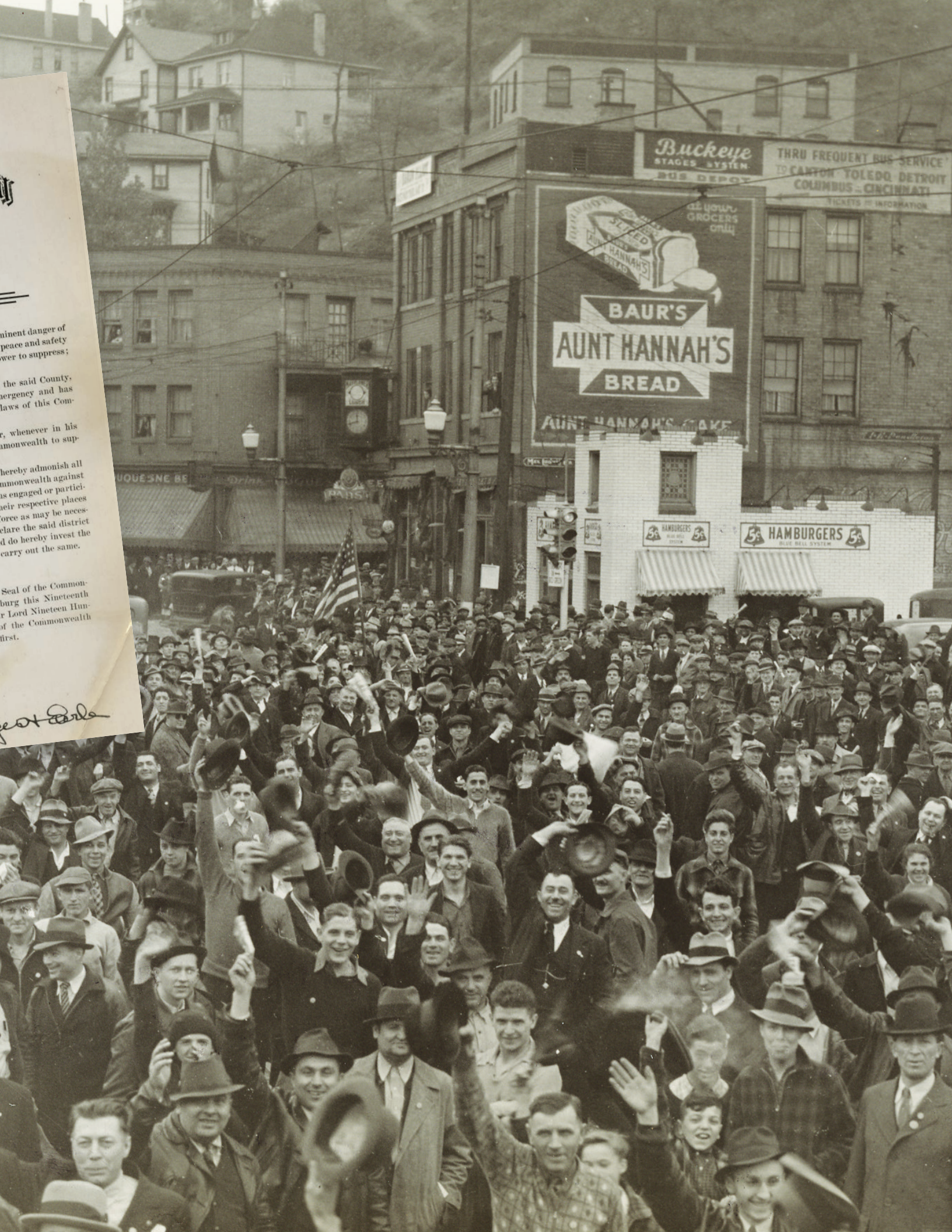
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ORGANIZING *Ladies'* GARMENT WORKERS

in Northeastern Pennsylvania: Min Matheson *and the* ILGWU

BY ROBERT P. WOLENSKY

From the mid-19th century, the economy of northeastern Pennsylvania had been dominated by anthracite. A 10-county area, comprising about 500 square miles in the Appalachian Mountains, contained 95 percent of the hemisphere's highest-quality "hard-coal," the leading fuel for homes, factories, and railroads in an industrializing nation. Between 1845 and the 1920s, millions of immigrants—from Germany, Wales, Ireland, Italy, and Poland, among other places—flocked to the region to work in the anthracite mines. Most earned meager livings in cities such as Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Pittston, Pottsville, and Hazleton as well as in hundreds of surrounding patch towns and rural villages. By the 1920s, however, following two decades of conflict between coal operators and workers, as well as growing competition from natural gas and fuel oil, mining began to decline. The national depression of the 1930s only made things worse. For a region that had been dependent on a single industry, the downturn of anthracite left many families and communities struggling to survive. With so many persons desperate for work, the region was ripe for new industries.

New York garment manufacturers saw an opportunity to profit from the region's cheap—and nonunionized—labor.

New York City had emerged as the garment manufacturing center of the United States by the beginning of the 20th century. Immigrants—particularly Jewish and Italian women—provided much of the skilled labor for "homeworking" as well as for the city's many "sweatshops" and garment factories. As the industry grew, so did the workers' desire for better wages and factory conditions. In June 1900, representatives from a small number of established unions met to discuss the need for a single, unified organization. They voted to create the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), headquartered in New York City and affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Over the next few decades, both the garment industry and the ILGWU grew and prospered.

By the early 1930s a major restructuring of the garment production system was changing the game. "Jobbers," who secured garment-making contracts from large manufacturers, realized they could cut out the middleman by securing orders directly





(ABOVE) Rows of women sewing in a garment shop. Courtesy of the Kheel Center, Cornell University.

(RIGHT) Min Matheson on a picket line with ILGWU Local 249, Pittston, Pennsylvania, late 1940s. Courtesy of Alice Reca.



Min Matheson with David Dubinsky, president of the ILGWU, after the settlement of the 1958 general dress strike. Courtesy of the Kheel Center, Cornell University and Steven Lukasik, Lukasik Studio. (INSET) ILGWU banner showing the union label. Courtesy of the Kheel Center, Cornell University.



from garment wholesalers and retailers. Once the orders had been obtained, jobbers worked with numerous subcontractors—often former garment workers running small, nonunion shops—who produced the clothing. Growing competition between the jobbers for big contracts put tremendous pressure on the subcontractors, who were pitted against one another for even the smallest margins. By 1930 about three-quarters of all garment making had been captured by the new jobber-subcontractor system. Many subcontractors purposely relocated outside of New York to take advantage of cheap labor and a nonunion workforce. The new “runaway shop” model weakened both the large manufacturers, who had dominated the industry, and the ILGWU, which had unionized factory laborers. New York’s loss, then, became northeastern Pennsylvania’s gain.

The burgeoning garment sector provided a welcome source of employment and income for Pennsylvania’s coal region families. The subcontractors who operated runaway shops benefited not only from a large, low-cost labor pool but also from personnel who, due to economic necessity and cultural tradition, possessed a strong work ethic. As former New Yorker William Cherkes, who opened a shop in Kingston, Pennsylvania, put it, a woman from the anthracite region who entered the area’s garment-making workforce “was doing it for a reason. She was doing it for family income because . . . the miners had no jobs; there were no jobs for men. . . . The women were the providers.” The ability of mothers and daughters to find jobs in the garment sector as fathers and sons searched—often fruitlessly—for employment in neighboring states or cities made it possible for many families to survive.



Cherkes, like many other garment shop owners, moved his business to the anthracite region because of the perception “that they could do better outside of New York City by not being controlled” by the ILGWU. As he put it, they relocated in order “to open their plants without interference from the four [ILGWU] locals. . . . By coming here where there was no unions, or no local branches, you could work independently.” But the ILGWU followed the garment industry into northeastern Pennsylvania, arriving in 1937 and establishing a headquarters in Scranton. In its first few years in the region, the union had comparatively few members. Then, in 1944, David Dubinsky, president

of the ILGWU, charged Min and Bill Matheson with organizing the Wyoming Valley’s garment shops. Over the next two decades, the Mathesons increased union membership by over 10,000 and brought about a number of improvements in workers’ lives.

The Matheson family moved to Kingston, about one mile from Cherkes’s factory, from Sayre, Pennsylvania, in north-central Pennsylvania, where Bill was an ILGWU organizer. Minnie (Min) Lurye was born in Chicago in 1909, the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants. Her father was a labor activist in the Chicago Cigar Makers Union. In 1928, she met Bill Matheson—a Canadian-born Scotsman—at a Chicago Federation of Labor meeting. Young radicals, they eschewed legal marriage and established a household together. They also pursued their own independent careers. In 1932, Min relocated to New Jersey to assist in the Paterson textile workers’ strike and then moved to New York City to learn the dressmaking trade. Bill joined her there, where they both became involved in the ILGWU.

Min Matheson Reflects on Organizing Pittston: An Interview with Alice M. Hoffman

HOFFMAN: Now, let me ask you, what was the difference in rates being paid to the women in the mob-controlled shops versus . . . other places?

MATHESON: The truth is that most of the garment workers, both Wilkes Barre and Pittston, were working for minimum wages. The government minimum at the time had reached sixteen dollars. That started out with twenty-five cents an hour.

HOFFMAN: Right. But when you organized, did you have an effect on those wage rates?

MATHESON: Well, five cents above the minimum, that's all we were getting. But by that time the people were fed-up with a lot of other things. For example, in Pittston, they would bring women in and they would say, "We'll teach you." These were natural sewers, and sometimes they'd work for a month for nothing. . . .

They were always using the gimmick of learners, which was officially part of—even their ads. You could stay a learner as long as the boss wanted you to be a learner. Wages were very low. They were actually the rock bottom government minimum. If it moved at all, it was like five cents an hour. I remember negotiating contracts for forty-five cents an hour endlessly, and employers were telling me, "You're putting me out of business." . . .

HOFFMAN: Okay, but what I'm trying to establish, Min, is that as these women who worked in the mob shops looked across the river to see what's happening in Wilkes Barre . . . you're saying it was the fairness and that kind of thing that they saw . . . rather than so much of the difference in the wage rate.

MATHESON: I'd say it wasn't so much the wage rate as it was generally the atmosphere and the conditions in the shop. There was really an awakening amongst the women throughout the area. One of the reasons was that the mines were down and the men weren't working. See, there was a big change in the relationship within the family which reflected itself in town, which affected what we were doing. . . .

The women were really coming into their own, so to speak. I'd say they were excellent and very capable. Of course, I'm prejudiced. In my eyes most of them were far and above the men they were married to. They had a habit of referring to the good ones. . . . Some miner was killed in the mines and they'd say, "It's too bad, because he was one of the good ones." The bad ones were the men who drank up their wages, beat

the women, who dominated and had tempers like fiends, and the women really carried on and kept the house together, but it was a poor kind of marriage relationship.

We were like the yeast in the dough when we came in, and we were into everything, like monkeys. Including elections. [I said] "What do you mean the women can't vote in Pittston?" Because I had a meeting telling them . . . who were we supporting at that time? Truman, I think. [They said] "Well, my man votes for me." That's the first I heard about it. . . .

Well, I said, "Will you explain that to me? How do they do this? Do they send the ballot to the house? What do they do?" It seems that the mob controlled the polling places and the man would go in with the woman and they would sign in like they should and then the man would go in and cast the vote for both of them. The women never got beyond the curtain. So it was "My man votes for me." And here I am telling them, giving them our propaganda and they vote for whoever the mob was supporting. So I took time on the radio and I said, "We're going to put Pittston back in the USA. I'm serving notice on those who think they control Pittston politically that we're going to put Pittston back in the USA. What do I mean? No man is going to vote for a woman. I have a personal pledge of women that they will go to the polls and they will sign in, but they will also cast their own ballots." That was a bigger revolution, I think, than organizing the shops. . . .

The first time we tried . . . do you know Carmella [Sabatino]? . . . We had to get her husband's permission. It's a good thing we had a good family. She was going to break the ice for us. We all went to this polling place. Oh, they were murder against us, because this would take their political power away. . . .

HOFFMAN: Was this an election day in 1948? The Truman election? . . .

MATHESON: Yes, this was the first time Truman [ran]. Because Roosevelt ran in 1944. We were not yet into Pittston. But between the time I came on staff in October 1944, to 1948, we had been doing all of this. And, as I said, the mines were down, the women were in the shop. The relationships with families had changed. . . .

Great deal of unemployment in the area. [Senator] Daniel Flood had introduced the Area Redevelopment Bill in Congress. I had gone to Washington to testify in favor of the bill. That's when I met John Kennedy. He was chairman of that committee. There was a lot of change in the air, and we just became a part of it, and I think we profited by this sudden growth of the women in teh [*sic*] area, growth and status. . . . ■

Interview by Alice M. Hoffman, October 27, 1983, Min Matheson Oral History Transcript, Labor Oral History Collection, Historical Collections and Labor Archives, The Pennsylvania State University Libraries, excerpt.



(TOP) Members of ILGWU Local 295 in Pittston prepare Easter baskets for children, 1959. Courtesy of Stephen N. Lukasik, Lukasik Studio. (RIGHT) ILGWU banner for the Northeast, Western Pennsylvania, and Ohio Department displaying tools of the industry and union labels. Courtesy of the Kheel Center, Cornell University.

In 1941 the couple moved to Sayre after Bill accepted an organizer position. In that year, too, Bill and Min legally married and Min gave birth to their first child. Three years later, in 1944, they moved to Kingston, where Bill was asked to organize the garment shops. Realizing her organizing abilities, ILGWU president David Dubinsky soon asked Min to become the general manager of the Wyoming Valley District while Bill served as the district's education director.

Upon their arrival, the Mathesons found only a handful of organized shops with a total of 650 union members. Working conditions were worse than they had imagined. Many owners maintained full control over their employees' lives, both at work and in the community. Min Matheson was struck by the evident powerlessness and subordination of the women workers in the city of Pittston. Women, who already "did the sewing and the cooking and the taking care of the lunches and getting the children out to school and the husbands out to work in the mines," toiled at runaway shops for inadequate pay. "They worked for weeks for nothing. And the hours!" Matheson recalled. "You know there were laws in the land but they weren't carrying out any of the laws. They did what they wished and made it easy for the women to come in any time of the day or night. Double, triple shifts."

To complicate matters, organized criminals followed the industry from New York and used garment shops as legal fronts for laundering money and other illicit activities. By the late 1930s, criminal elements had infiltrated parts of the local garment industry, controlling between 20 and 25 shops located mainly in Pittston, although their

influence was said to extend to dozens more. As the Pennsylvania Crime Commission assessed in 1970, the "unemployed coal mining population," already "used to low wages and poor working conditions," were ripe for exploitation by organized criminals.

The Mathesons had some immediate successes in communities such as Wilkes-Barre and Kingston, but in others, such as Pittston, the situation was more difficult. Efforts to institute change through the political process were stymied by organized crime's control of elections. As Min recalled, "the women were never allowed to vote. . . . Attorneys and judges, a lot of them knew, but . . . it was all covered up, you know." The Pittston criminal element could also count on the support of local police to keep the union out.

Min Matheson was dismayed at the relatively powerless role of women in the community and, indeed, in the ILGWU hierarchy, which was populated mainly by men. She was able to overcome this powerlessness through her enormous personal skills as an organizer. She exhibited brilliant, spur-of-the-moment strategies that drew upon the strengths and social roles of women and gained wide media attention. For example, after being verbally attacked as a "slut" on a picket line at a mob-owned shop, she quickly had a friend collect her daughters, ages four and five, dress them in brightly starched pinafores, and bring them to the striking shop, where she handed them picket signs and had them join the line. The press prominently featured the "children on picket line" story.

Matheson won widespread support among both the rank-and-file and among community elites. According to Dorothy Ney, a business agent in Pittston, women were willing to follow her because she gave

them courage and strength: "They used to just pack the [union] hall because they loved to hear Min talk. She could convince anybody [to join the union]. Whatever she believed in, they believed in." Overcoming her own "suspicious of business" background and bucking ILGWU precedent and policy, she met—and cooperated—with community economic leaders. She allied the union with the Democratic Party, and she became a prominent civic leader. By linking the union cause with the community's moral and civic high ground, she helped labor gain an entirely new sense of legitimacy among community leaders and members who had traditionally opposed unions.

The Mathesons drew upon Min's skills as an organizer and speaker and Bill's abilities as a strategist and educator to build the ILGWU into a political, economic, and social force. Under their leadership the union established a labor education certificate program for members at Wilkes College (now Wilkes University), a health center in Wilkes-Barre that included a mobile unit that visited shops in surrounding areas, a political education program that promoted regular seminars, a widely read newsletter called *Needlepoint*, and a traveling chorus that became regionally known for Broadway-style productions. The union endorsed political candidates, contributed to election campaigns, and provided Democratic Party "foot soldiers" to get out the vote. Members pushed for labor and social legislation in Harrisburg and Washington and often traveled to the capitols to lobby lawmakers. They backed local civic and voluntary programs, contributing time, money, and leadership to economic development and community betterment campaigns led by the Chamber of Commerce, the Community Chest, and other groups.

In 1963 the Mathesons left the Wyoming Valley for a union assignment in New York City. More than 700 people attended a testimonial dinner for them. According to one newspaper account: "Never has Greater Wilkes-Barre witnessed a demonstration such as the transfer of Mrs. Matheson evoked. The reaction not only attested to the loyalty she commanded from the rank and file of the union, but the esteem in which she was held in the community after two decades of service." When the Mathesons left, the Wyoming Valley District held a membership of 11,000 workers, mainly women, in 168 unionized shops. The story of this remarkable turnaround is one not only about organizing workers and fighting subcontractors (legitimate and criminal) but also about an extraordinarily loyal and activist workforce and the careful strategy of building acceptance and legitimacy within the wider community. The Mathesons provided a textbook example of how to construct an educational and health infrastructure to enhance civic engagement and workers' well-being.

In the years that followed, the globalization and outsourcing trends of the 1980s and 1990s had a devastating effect on the Wyoming Valley's—and, indeed, Pennsylvania's—once thriving garment industries. The number of garment, apparel, and textile workers in the Keystone State surged to a peak of 181,000 in 1965 but fell to 50,000 by 1995, a year when only six unionized shops remained in the Wyoming Valley. That same year, the ILGWU merged with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) to form UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees), ending 95 years as an independent labor organization.

Pennsylvania was not alone in this decline. Ironically for the Wyoming Valley, the same low-cost factors that carried runaway shops out of New York City encouraged the industry to find even cheaper locales—first in the American South, then in developing nations. By the mid-1980s, 62 out of every 100 types of apparel sold in the United States were made overseas, compared to only

4 out of every 100 in the early 1960s. Today, nearly all American-sold garments are imports.

Although the jobs, shops, and many of the personnel are gone, the garment-making legacy and the example of dedicated organizers such as Min and Bill Matheson live on to inspire new generations of workers in new sorts of workplaces and industries to insist that labor has dignity and that workers have rights. ■

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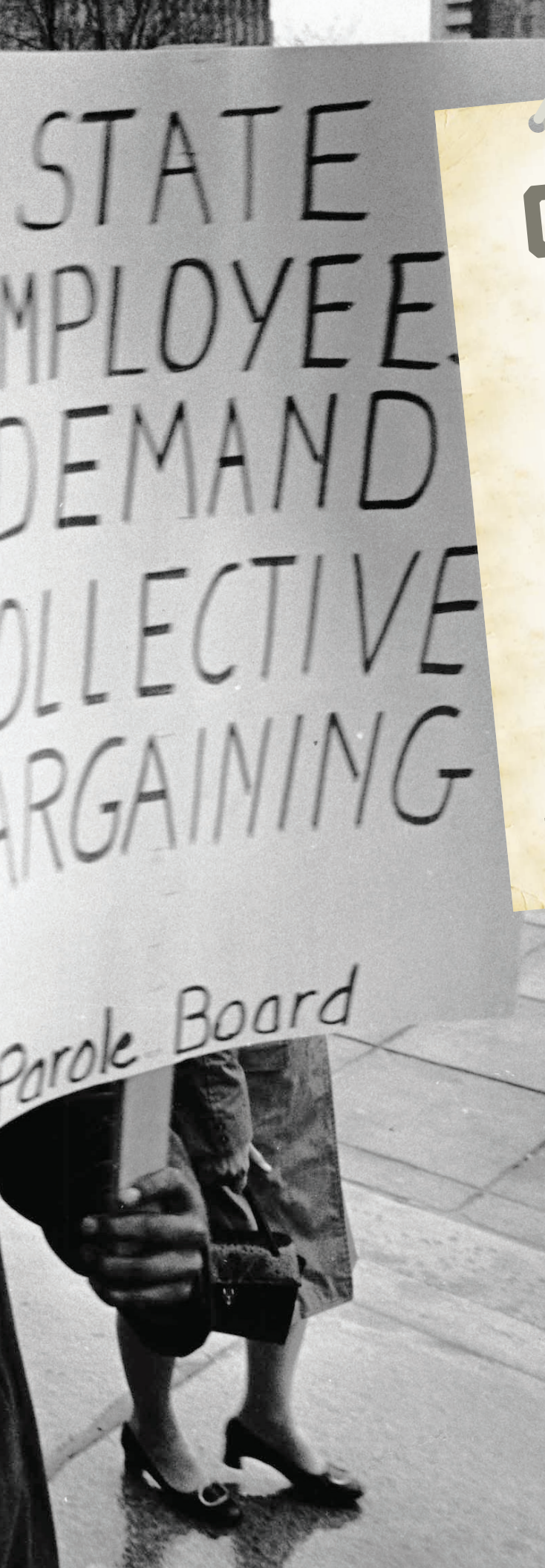
September 1963 issue of *Needlepoint*, the Wyoming Valley District's newsletter, edited by Bill Matheson.



STATE
DEMAND
LABOR

STAY
EMPLOYED
AND

WE NEED
10% INCREASES
NOW
OR GO HOME
WELL



ORGANIZING *the* KEYSTONE STATE:

**AFSCME
and the Campaign
for Commonwealth
Workers
in Pennsylvania**

==== BY FRANCIS RYAN ====

In December 1965, in a speech before the AFL-CIO convention in San Francisco, Jerry Wurf, president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), railed against the conditions faced by public sector workers: “We have across this great land municipal sweatshops; we have state sweatshops; we have places in Pennsylvania and Mississippi; we have places in the north and south where public employees are paid rotten, miserable wages, where the courts throw injunctions at us, where the statutes makes [sic] it impossible to organize at times.” Elected the previous year with a commitment to build the union’s membership, Wurf supported drives that would result in AFSCME’s membership surging from just over 200,000 in 1961 to almost one million by the late 1970s. During these years, the status of state employees transformed from one of powerlessness to one of increasing strength and political influence around the nation. A critical chapter in this narrative took place in Pennsylvania from 1969 to 1973, as unions strove to organize the commonwealth’s 75,000 employees. Pennsylvania’s AFSCME story shines a light on the ways in which organized labor was connected with the political and social developments of this tumultuous era.

Members of AFSCME Local 1623 in Philadelphia strike for bargaining rights in May 1969. Courtesy of Walter R. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.



(ABOVE) Strikers during Philadelphia's 1938 garbage collectors' strike. (RIGHT) Trash cans stacked outside an apartment building in West Philadelphia during the 1938 garbage collectors' strike. Philadelphia Record Photograph Collection.

The potential for a successful unionization drive for Pennsylvania public sector workers had been acknowledged by state labor leaders since the New Deal. Between the 1930s and 1960s, however, little progress was made. The Keystone State's industrial unions—especially the United Mine Workers, Steelworkers, and Teamsters—were recognized by Pennsylvania governors and legislators as consequential players in the state political system and boasted powerful state federations. In contrast, public worker organizations had almost no impact on state policy, and local government workers remained mostly outside the ranks of organized labor. Following the 1919 Boston Police Strike, in which Massachusetts governor Calvin Coolidge mobilized the National Guard to restore order after a two-day walkout, a consensus against any form of government sector strike or collective bargaining had taken hold. The new federal labor laws of the 1930s that extended collective bargaining rights to industrial workers stopped short of providing these rights to public servants. Some federal unions, such as the American Federation of Government Employees and a range of postal organizations and mutual aid societies, existed in states around the nation at midcentury, but the rights of their members were not officially recognized.

Despite the limits placed on public employees, the political and social changes of the New Deal and wartime periods saw an upturn in government services, with corresponding growth in service bureaus in states around the country. Pennsylvania's wide assortment of clerical jobs and maintenance and labor positions in state facilities also grew; over 100,000 workers were employed by the commonwealth in the postwar period compared with the 75,000 claimed by the union in the late 1930s. Conditions faced by these employees resembled those of government workers around the nation. Government sector workers, from turnpike maintenance employees to departmental supervisors, were all considered political appointees, and, as such,

were subject to the abrupt shifts of the spoils system. Following the election of Governor George Howard Earle III in 1934—the first Democrat to hold the office since Reconstruction—Pennsylvania's governor's office changed hands between parties on a regular basis, with devastating consequences for state employees. With each change in Harrisburg, workers were summarily fired and replaced by loyalists of the party then in power. All workers, regardless of political affiliation, were subject to political demands, including mandatory political contributions and attendance at political rallies and dinners. These political "contributions" were taken from paychecks that were already small; Pennsylvania government employees earned \$26 less per month than their counterparts in manufacturing. Under such conditions, employee morale was low and turnover exceedingly high—with predictable consequences for the quality of services the state provided.

Even with their exclusion from the provisions of US labor law, such oppressive conditions encouraged a core section of state and local government workers to organize to address their problems. In 1932, Wisconsin state employees formed an organization to fight against proposed job cuts following the election of a Democratic governor. After building a coalition that effectively stopped these layoffs, the organization's early organizer, Arnold S. Zander, began a campaign to build a national union within the American Federation of Labor. In 1936, Zander's organization was chartered as the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Representing a wide range of municipal public works employees, professional and clerical workers, and staffers of correctional institutions and state hospitals across the nation, AFSCME gained 80,000 members by 1950. The new union's largest and most militant section developed

among Philadelphia's Department of Public Works employees, whose sanitation, street maintenance, and water bureaus affiliated after a weeklong strike in October 1938. Organized by sanitation truck driver William J. McEntee, Philadelphia's AFSCME District Council 33 was a trailblazer within the union, setting new standards for the possibility of big city municipal collective bargaining. In 1939, the union secured exclusive representation rights, making Philadelphia the first major city to do so. By 1950, District Council 33 secured for city workers higher wages, vacation time, a seniority system, and limits to the political patronage system and arbitrary rule of ward leaders.

Many believed that the success of AFSCME in Philadelphia represented a beachhead from which a major statewide organizing campaign could be coordinated. The apparatus from which to oversee such a campaign was already in existence: Pennsylvania State Employees Council 26, founded in 1938, represented several hundred state employees, mostly in correctional facilities and state hospitals. Hopes of expanding this council stalled, however. During a wave of conservative legislative successes across the nation, Pennsylvania's Republican governor James H. Duff signed the Pennsylvania Public Employees Law in 1947, barring the commonwealth's employees from striking and limiting organizing. Following this legal block, and weakened by internal disputes, perennially high turnover, and a lack of commitment by Pennsylvania's industrial union leaders, state workers saw their condition worsen through the next decade. In the 1950s the pay rates of Pennsylvania state employees ranked 33rd in the nation, placing them on par with state workers in the South. The pay gap between Pennsylvania state workers and their industrial counterparts had increased to \$28. Noting these facts, District Council 26 president Reuben H. Miller argued: "employees are going further into debt with each payday and are leaving state jobs for better salaries in industry and with the federal government." Such turnover, in addition to low morale over the union's lack of recognition, impacted membership. In February 1957, District Council 26 had fewer than 1,300 dues-paying members, a number far short of the 10,000 the union publically claimed.

The fragile status of AFSCME's Pennsylvania chapter resembled that of other state councils across the nation. Yet signs of hope remained. In 1959, after aggressive lobbying by AFSCME, Wisconsin's state legislature recognized the right of state workers to collectively bargain, marking a legal shift that encouraged similar political action in other states. After years of militant action by city workers, New York City's Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr. issued an order that extended similar rights to its municipal employees, resulting in a surge

in successful organizing that encompassed diverse job categories, from school crossing guards to zookeepers. Over the next decade, Pennsylvania's state employees would similarly be emboldened to address the problems that had existed for years.

In the 1960s, several important social and political developments led to more favorable conditions for those interested in organizing state workers in Pennsylvania. With the merger of the AFL-CIO in 1955, a new emphasis on political action emerged around the country, with the Committee on Political Education (COPE) impacting political races to address the concerns of working people. President Kennedy's Task Force on Employee-Management Relations in the Federal Service determined the need for standardization and implementation of industrial-style workplace functions and led to his signing of Executive Order 10988, which increased federal union membership, in 1962. Around the same time, thousands of the nation's public school teachers staged walkouts and rallies that led to their formal recognition for the first time. During these years, Pennsylvania's teachers increased both their membership and their public presence, with locals of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) organizing in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and the Pennsylvania State Education Association, an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA), mobilizing its members for rallies at the state capitol. By the end of the decade, the AFT and the NEA were two of the largest unions in the country.

The actions of militant public workers corresponded with a change in political attitudes, both in Washington and in Harrisburg. Following conservative Republican Barry Goldwater's loss in the 1964 presidential election, many moderate Republicans distanced themselves from the rhetoric of right-wing extremism, moving toward policies that embraced some forms of social legislation

while maintaining commitments to fiscal prudence. Personified by such national political figures as New York's Nelson Rockefeller and Pennsylvania's Senator Hugh Scott, liberal Republicans embraced civil rights legislation and were often open to pro-labor measures in forging coalitions with moderate voters. Such receptiveness was seen in Republican acceptance of new demands of Pennsylvania State Troopers, who, through various lodges of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), were demanding collective bargaining rights. Such new attitudes on the part of police officers reflected a national trend that emphasized law and order. Legislative initiatives that strengthened resources for law enforcement led to police becoming more politically conscious and demanding their own economic advancement. Facing the same kinds of politicization of the job in terms of advancements and salary stagnation, officers lobbied



Clipping from *Philadelphia Record*, September 1970, discussing issues at stake in Philadelphia teachers' strike. Richardson Dilworth Papers.

for the right to represent their interests collectively. In 1967, the newly elected Republican governor Raymond P. Shafer supported a constitutional change, passed the following year as Act 111, to allow binding arbitration on government bodies and the right of state police and firefighters to collective bargaining.

Many political observers saw in the success of Act 111 an opening for a similar law that would cover civilian state employees. Within AFSCME, the political support for these historic revisions to the state's labor laws was noticed by Gerald W. McEntee, a young organizer based in Philadelphia. The son of William J. McEntee, the president of District Council 33, Jerry McEntee had been an organizer with the union since 1956 and had spent several years building organizations among Easton city and Lancaster school employees. Many of the state workers he had met expressed pro-union sentiment; the existing state law, however, hampered effective organizing. McEntee coordinated a political and public relations campaign, bringing together the state's labor organizations and a range of citizens groups to lobby for revision. In 1969 Governor Shafer formed the Commission to Revise the Public Employee Law of Pennsylvania, which, after several months of hearings, concluded that existing state law restricting collective bargaining was "unreasonable and unenforceable" and recommended a new law, similar to Act 111, to address it. The bill was passed as Act 195 on July 23, 1970, and became law the following October.

With the legal framework in place to organize the commonwealth, Jerry McEntee looked to the national union for backing. His proposal to organize all state workers was a risky one. AFSCME had just come off a similar organizing drive to bring in thousands of New York's state employees, but, after committing several million dollars to the effort, the campaign lost out to the independent New York Civil Service Association. After this gamble, the union's finances were fragile, and the political consequences of another failure would be devastating. In the summer of 1970, Jerry McEntee met with Jerry Wurf to pitch his idea. "I went to a map store and bought a great big map of Pennsylvania and then, I had a little office a little desk and I did some research and put all these highway yards down along with the approximate amount of people that worked at the highway yards. I did this for all the jobsites throughout Pennsylvania," McEntee recalled. With the map in hand, McEntee convinced Wurf to commit \$2 million to the drive and to disband the existing state District Council 26, which would be replaced by AFSCME's Pennsylvania Organizing Committee (POC). As its organizing director, Gerald W. McEntee started operations with just one staff member—Bernard "Buck" Martin—dividing the state into two parts. Soon after, with the staff boosted to include Edward J. Keller and Pat Salvatore, the organizers began a two-and-a-half-year push to represent state workers.

AFSCME's POC made important inroads with maintenance and trades workers and with highway division workers in the

Department of Transportation. With the initial organizing success and the first collective bargaining agreement signed, more victories followed. By 1973, a master contract covering all commonwealth employees was signed with Governor Milton Shapp. This document would become a model for similar

campaigns throughout the nation. Also that year, AFSCME Council 13—covering all state workers throughout the commonwealth—was established, with Jerry McEntee elected its executive director. Through these years, Pennsylvania's AFSCME gained the reputation as one of the most militant sections in the nation, becoming the first to organize a strike against an entire state in 1975. Most importantly, through contracts the union succeeded in ending the patronage system, allowing for job security without relation to political parties and encouraging professional careers in public service.

Pennsylvania's AFSCME story provides a model for the shift toward government sector unionization and the ways in which the labor movement would continue to evolve through to the end of the 20th century and into the next. With state workers organized throughout the nation, AFSCME's membership reached the one million mark by 1980; by the end of the century, it was the largest union in the AFL-CIO. In 1981, following the death of Jerry Wurf, Gerald W. McEntee was elected AFSCME's international president, an office he would hold until his retirement in 2012. As leader of AFSCME, McEntee oversaw a range of progressive programs in the union, including resolutions to protect the rights of LGBT workers, establishment of retiree chapters, and forums to encourage young leadership development—all measures soon adopted by other unions. By 2010, public sector workers were the most unionized group of workers in the United States.

Pennsylvania's influential organizing drive of the late 1960s and 1970s took place in an era of enormous and wide-ranging changes in the social and economic fabric of American life. Even as membership in public sector unions increased during this time, industrial unions in Pennsylvania saw losses in membership as manufacturing in the state declined. As the contemporary labor situation—in the commonwealth, nationally, and globally—continues to shift and evolve, the history of Pennsylvania's state and municipal workers should remind us of the significance the state plays in these changes. ■



Francis Ryan teaches at Rutgers University's School of Management and Labor Relations in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He is the author of AFSCME's Philadelphia Story: Municipal Workers and Urban Power in the Twentieth Century (2011).

Governor Raymond Shafer signs Senate Bill 1333 (later enacted as Act 195), the statewide collective bargaining bill that Gerald McEntee (behind and to the right of the governor) and AFSCME campaigned hard to pass, July 13, 1970. Courtesy of Walter R. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

Reflections of a Woman Union Organizer: Judy Mollinger

Born in 1943 in Philadelphia, Mollinger attended the University of Connecticut and returned to the city in 1965 to take a job as a case worker with the Philadelphia County Board of Assistance where she joined AFSCME Local 1623 and was elected its treasurer one year later. In 1970, she joined AFSCME's Pennsylvania Organizing Committee, the first woman organizer hired by Gerald W. McEntee. In this 1976 oral history interview, Mollinger recounts how she became an organizer and some of the challenges she faced.

I came on staff August 31, 1970. It was still called the Pennsylvania Organizing Committee. Technically we were all [AFSCME] International reps. . . . The president of my local was offered a job, and I happened to be around when we were talking about legislation. We had dinner several times at the Franklin Motor Inn on the Parkway to discuss the legislation because we were still local officers, to discuss lobbying efforts to pass the legislation, to discuss where we were heading, and was it possible to organize state workers, and we thought it was.

Then I went over to the office, . . . and I had a little chat with McEntee. He told me that he was increasing staff, and he told me who he was hiring. I very politely said to him, "What, No women?" Those were my words. He said, "Do you want the job?" I said, "how many days do I have to think it over?" He said, "Take as long as you want." I said "I'll have to get back to you tomorrow." And I told him I'd take the job. So basically I asked for the job. . . . I asked for it on the basis that there were no women on the staff, none at all, except a secretary, which is ridiculous because there were a lot of women out there to organize.

. . . We had the bulk of state workers organized after the first three bargaining elections: Trades and Labor was the first, the second was 21,000 hospital workers. That was the Human Services unit and that was the unit I was very active in organizing. During the Highway campaign, I was just organizing other workers and just travelling up and down the whole eastern third of the state talking about AFSCME and organizing just different kinds of jobs, clerical jobs, social service jobs, hospital jobs, all different kinds of jobs.

I travelled every single county in the eastern third of Pennsylvania. I went into the mining towns. I remember those towns. I went into Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Hazelton, Easton. I went way up into the country in the hills of Bradford County. . . . I was in every single county in the eastern third of Pennsylvania organizing. . . . [In] Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, the idea of union was not strange, so it was easier to organize because it wasn't a terrible thing, a union. The difficulty there was being a woman and trying to organize certain categories of jobs. For instance, I had meetings with mine inspectors, all men. I remember going to meetings at nine o'clock at night in country restaurants, you know. They were difficult to organize for two reasons; number one, I was a woman, number two, they come from a background of the whole problem of the loss of the mining industry in that area of Pennsylvania, and the fact that the union could not save the mining industry there. So you had a great reluctance to join a union. We had problems there.



Female organizers such as Judy Mollinger paved the way for union women such as these clerical workers, who watch with AFSCME Council 13 executive director Gerald McEntee (right) as Governor Milton Shapp signs a contract with clerical workers. Courtesy of Walter R. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

. . . When I was organizing in the hospitals, I had what I called my organizing pocketbook. It was shaped differently than my usual pocketbook. They were more like sacks, or now they call them totes. What I used to do is use that for a pocketbook so that I could sneak the organizing literature into the hospital. I would go dressed up in high heels, stockings and a dress, and then I carried this nice-looking tote bag so I looked like I was somebody coming on some kind of business.

I remember at Byberry I used to sneak through the tunnels. I would go to the maintenance guys and they would have a whole series of underground tunnels at the hospital. I would go through the tunnels, this is the sub-basement tunnels, then I would go up through the basement, because the maintenance guys have keys, and then I would get into the main halls of the ward and try to find some of my key people. Now, sometimes I had to walk past nursing offices and doctors' offices, but because of the way I was dressed, they thought I was somebody else. The key administrators knew what I looked like, but all of the head nurses and people like that didn't know what I looked like, so once I would sneak into the building from the underground tunnels, I just looked like your local social worker walking down the hall or something, and I would be able to get to my key organizing people. . . .

I had some resistance, as I said earlier, because I was a woman, but not when I got into areas where there were a lot of women workers. Then . . . I didn't have resistance: they were surprised because there were very few women as organizers, at least in 1972 and '73. Now, this is 1976, end of 1975, and a lot of unions have many more women [organizers] than they did, but that's only in the last two years. We now have about nine or ten, but for the first three years I was the only one so I had some problems with that, [but] not a lot. ■

Interview by William Tyler, May 10, 1976, Judy Mollinger Oral History Transcript, Labor Oral History Collection, Historical Collections and Labor Archives, The Pennsylvania State University Libraries, excerpt.

TEACHERS' PAGE

Workers United: The Knights Of Labor

BY KARALYN MCGRORTY DERSTINE

Introduction

We live in a society that is the direct result of the work and sacrifices of previous generations. It is often difficult for 21st-century students to understand that there was a time in the not too distant past when workers had little legal recourse against abusive employers. In fact, the law was on the side of the often-unscrupulous industrialist. Few realize that minimum wage laws, the 8-hour workday (or 40-hour week), safe work environments, and the prohibition of child labor are benefits we enjoy because of the efforts of the American labor movement.

Workers' desire to organize is nearly as old as the country itself and has played an important role in the nation's history. Throughout America's development, disagreements over wages and workers' rights raised the question of the legality of collective bargaining. In 1806 Philadelphia shoemakers attempted to set their own wages and were found guilty of conspiracy in *Commonwealth v. Pullis*; it was not until 1842, in *Commonwealth v. Hunt*, that a court ruled in support of the legality of unions, provided they used legal means to further legal ends. Even after *Hunt*, unions had little impact on the condition and livelihood of their memberships.

This was the situation for the Garment Cutters Association of Philadelphia in the 1860s. Formed in 1862, the organization dissolved in 1869. Out of the Garment Cutters' failure, however, was born the first national industrial union in the United States when nine tailors from Philadelphia set out to create their own union—the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor. When the organization began it

resembled a secretive fraternal order with elaborate rituals more than it did a modern labor union, but it was soon transformed under Terence V. Powderly, the mayor of Scranton, who assumed leadership of the organization in 1879. Under Powderly, the union grew from a collection of small local assemblies into the most prominent national union of the latter part of the 19th century, with over 700,000 members at its height. Powderly shortened the name to the Knights of Labor, reduced the organization's secrecy and restrictions, and admitted members from both skilled and unskilled professions as well as women, immigrants, and African Americans from all industries. Under Powderly's leadership, coal miners, printers, tailors, farmers, and individuals from dozens of occupations all united to better the social and economic conditions of the working class. Powderly and national leaders focused on arbitration, education, boycotts, and legislation as means for change.

Many local assemblies, however, resorted to strikes. In 1886, the Haymarket Riot in Chicago, which began as a peaceful demonstration, turned deadly after an unknown assailant threw a bomb into the crowd. Bad publicity and blame for the event, which led to internal strife over the use of strikes, as well as poor organization led to the decline the Knights of Labor, which unraveled by the 1890s. Although the Knights of Labor did not persist into the 20th century, its impact and agenda directly impacted modern society.

Through exploration of the preamble of the constitution of the Knights of Labor and of the preface and other segments of Terence Powderly's book *Thirty Years of Labor*, students can glimpse the mind behind the Knights of Labor. The lesson plan that follows allows students to study

the goals and objectives of America's largest union in the late 19th century and consider its impact on modern society.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Read, analyze, and interpret primary source materials
- Evaluate strategies and philosophies of social movements
- Assess continuity and change in society
- Articulate the content of a historical event or action

Essential Questions

- How has social disagreement and collaboration been beneficial to American society?
- How does continuity and change within US history influence your community today?

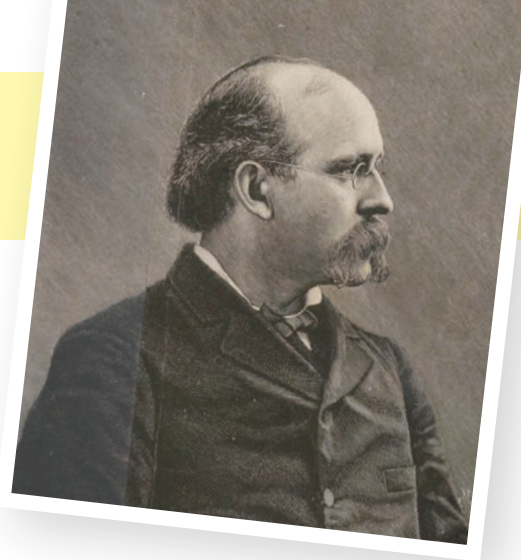
Primary Sources

- Preamble of the constitution of the General Assembly of the Knights of Labor
- T. V. Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor, 1859–1889* (Columbus, OH: Excelsior Publishing House, 1889), pp. 3–7, 302–8, 313–14, 319, 324, 411–21, 471–80, 679–82

Other Resources

American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives

This website contains personal papers of Terence V. Powderly (<http://archives.lib.cua.edu/findingaid/powderly.cfm>) and various documents of the Knights of Labor. "The



(LEFT) Terence V. Powderly (frontispiece) and (RIGHT) cover of T. V. Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor: 1859 to 1889* (Columbus, OH, 1889).

Question of the Knights of Labor” (<http://archives.lib.cua.edu/res/docs/education/knights/laquestion.pdf>) is an interesting essay about the Catholic Church’s concern over radicalism within the Knights of Labor.

The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia

Contains several essays on various people, events, and organizations that played a role in the history of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the United States. Most notable for this lesson is Patrick Grubbs’s overview of the Knights of Labor (<http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/knights-of-labor/>).

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

Contains several essays on various people, events, and organizations that played a role in the history of unions in the United States (<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/populism-and-agrarian-discontent/timeline-terms/knights-labor>).

Suggested Instruction

Activity 1

The conditions faced by American workers in the late 19th century

As an introduction to the exercise, lead students in an in-class brainstorming session and discussion of the conditions faced by American workers during the latter part of the 19th century. Have students share their thoughts and write them on the board. For homework, ask students to research and write a brief essay on Terence V. Powderly.

Activity 2

Principles of the Knights of Labor

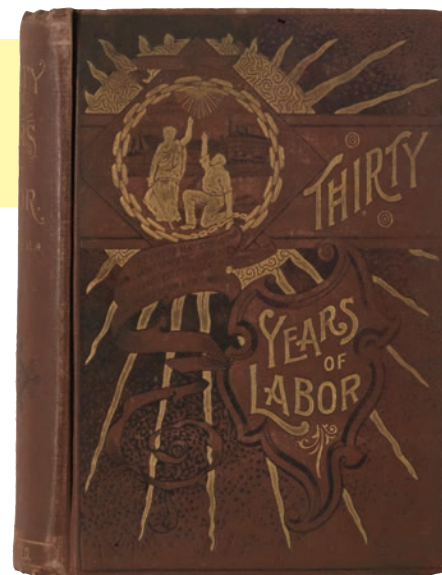
Using the evening homework assignment, ask students to discuss Powderly and his work, creating a brief biography as a class. Distribute copies of the preamble of the constitution of the Knights of Labor.

- Ask students to read the preamble silently and highlight or take notes.
- After they complete reading, break students into pairs to discuss the preamble.
- Ask students to answer the following questions in their copybooks:
 - For what purpose was the Order of the Knights of Labor organized?
 - From the perspective of the author of this document, what must workers be able to do in order to fully enjoy the wealth they create?
 - What issues discussed in class were the Knights of Labor attempting to address? (Refer to notes from the previous day.)
 - What do you think are the most important principles put forth in this document?
 - In your opinion, what are three demands of the Knights of Labor that have been met and from which we benefit today?
- Ask students to create a political cartoon based on the most important principles of the preamble of the Knights of Labor for homework.

Activity 3

The legacy of the Knights of Labor

- Ask students to share their political cartoons with the class.
- Discuss the major concepts in each illustration based on the following questions:
 - What did students identify as the most important principles put forth in the preamble of the Knights of Labor?
 - Are the principles identified ones from which we benefit today?
- Distribute copies of the preface and three sections from *Thirty Years of Labor*:
 - Creation of a Department of Labor (pages 302–8, 313–14, 319–24)
 - Use of immigrant workers (pages 411–21, 679–82)
 - Establishment of the eight-hour workday (pages 471–80, including illustration)



- Break students into three groups and assign each group one of the three sections.
- Ask students to read and highlight the preface and their assigned pages. Then have students discuss their responses to the following questions:
 - How are the principles outlined in *Thirty Years of Labor* reflected in modern society?
 - If Powderly were alive today, would he be satisfied with modern labor conditions? Why or why not?

Culminating Assessment

To complete the unit, have students research and write a five-paragraph essay on change over time focused on one of these topics: the Department of Labor, immigrant workers, or the eight-hour workday. The paper should make an argument as to whether the activities of the Knights of Labor have impacted modern society. ■

Karalyn McGroarty Derstine teaches US history at Gwynedd Mercy Academy in Lower Gwynedd, Pennsylvania.

PA Standards

Grade Level: 10th and 11th grade

This lesson will take five 40-minute class periods

History: 8.1.U: A, C; 8.3.U: A, B, C, D

Civics and Government: 8.3.C.B

The material referenced in this lesson and additional activities and background information are available on our website at <http://hsp.org/education/unit-plans/workers-united-the-knights-of-labor>

TEACHERS' TURN

Pennsylvania Workers' Triumphs and Tribulations in Their Struggle to Organize

BY KARALYN MCGRORTY DERSTINE

Our students live in an era in which eight-hour workdays, federal and state minimum wages, and two-day weekends are considered the norm for most middle-class workers. They also live in an era when work is in flux—with significant numbers of people working alternate or flexible schedules, working overtime (either by choice or compulsion), or just struggling to find paid employment at all. Yet, though the fight for workers' rights is far from over—it is an ongoing process—American workers do have more protections and rights than they did a century—or two centuries—ago. It is often difficult, therefore, for students to understand that American workers have not always enjoyed these conditions, and that there was a time when their attempts to improve working conditions so that they could both be safe at work and support themselves and their families by forming unions and, occasionally, going on strike were considered illegal activities. The four articles in this issue of *Pennsylvania Legacies* help teachers introduce labor issues and labor history to their students by providing information about some of the important people and events relating to organized labor in Pennsylvania and the nation. By telling the stories of 19th-century shoemakers, 20th-century steel and garment workers, and public sector workers in the 20th and 21st centuries, these articles provide insight into the struggles of workers from different backgrounds to organize in the face of opposition from bosses and authority: the challenges they faced, the rights they demanded, and the outcomes of their efforts.

Artisans in the Early Republic

Debate, strife, and compromise have been driving forces behind the development of the United States. Brian Greenberg's article explores tensions in early 19th-century Philadelphia between cordwainers (shoemakers) and merchant manufacturers who profited from their labor. Wage disputes led to a strike that resulted in arrests and a conspiracy trial. *Commonwealth v. Pullis*, the first trial to arise from a strike in the United States, divided the prosecution and defense along Federalist and Jeffersonian lines. The court's decision would outlaw labor unions until *Commonwealth v. Hunt* (1842). Teachers may use this article to explore the tensions inherent in the early republic through discussion and debate.

- Prior to reading the article, introduce students to the Federalists and Jeffersonians. As a class, complete a chart identifying the political and philosophical differences between the two groups.
- Ask students to read the article. While reading, have them imagine the workplace conditions of the early 19th century and the changes that were occurring in the new nation. What would have been the responsibilities, day-to-day experiences, and concerns of cordwainers and merchants? How would they have differed and how would they have overlapped? Help students define and consider the following terms: master, apprentice, industrialization, wage slavery, market society, Jeffersonian, and Federalist.

- Break students into two groups: Federalists and Jeffersonians. Then have them debate the cordwainers' right to what they considered a "fair wage."

Early 20th-Century Steelworkers

Pennsylvania steel—an industry as tough as the material it produced. Although steelworkers performed dangerous, backbreaking jobs that helped make America a wealthy and technologically advanced nation, they enjoyed little pay and virtually no protections for almost a century. Despite relentless efforts on the part of organized labor, workers were outmatched for decades by wealthy and ruthless steel company owners and managers. The New Deal and World War II, however, elicited unprecedented federal interventions. The political and social changes brought forth during the 1930s and 1940s transformed the relationship between employee and employer. For the first time in American history, the national government showed "a new level of support for unionization" through the National Industrial Recovery Act and subsequent legislation, and steel employees were able for the first time to confront employers united and supported by federal legislation. Perry Blatz's article can aid teachers looking to explore with their students the wide-ranging effects of the Great Depression and President Roosevelt's transformative New Deal policies. After reading the article ask students to consider the following:

- How did Woodrow Wilson's approach to steel during WWI differ from Franklin Roosevelt's during WWII?

- What tactics did the steel industry use to dissuade unionization of its employees?
- Ask students to research the following New Deal people and programs: Franklin D. Roosevelt; National Industrial Recovery Act; National Labor Relations Act (NLRA); Frances Perkins; National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Have them consider how these people and programs transformed American society.
- Have students create a chart of the following: American Federation of Labor (AFL); American Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers (AAISTW); United Mine Workers (UMW); Committee on Industrial Organization (CIO); Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC). Ask them to identify the objectives of each organization.

Female Garment Workers in the Mid-20th Century

Robert Wolensky's article explores the unionization of female garment workers in northeastern Pennsylvania. Teachers can use this article as a microcosm of labor history in the United States as well as to examine how gender has influenced work and labor organizing. It gives wonderful insight into how predatory "runaway" shops trying to evade the watchful eye of the ILGWU in New York came to the region looking for hard workers at low wages and the challenges faced by female workers and labor organizers. But, through the organizational and educational initiatives spearheaded by the Mathesons—and especially through the leadership of Min Matheson—the position of garment workers in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania emerged from one of exploitation and political powerlessness to one of strength and protection. It's a wonderful study of how workers overcame organized crime, extralegal business practices, corruption, and sexism through unionization and legislation. The article's coda also touches on the ways that outsourcing and globalization—continuations of the



Worker cutting steel sheets, Pittsburgh, 1938. Courtesy of Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information Photograph Collections, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

same trends that led runaway shops to flee New York and establish garment factories in northeastern Pennsylvania—led to the demise of the region's garment industry. While reading the article teachers may ask students to ponder the following questions:

- Why were garment shops running away from New York? What were they looking for in northeastern Pennsylvania? Why was northeastern Pennsylvania an attractive venue for these shops?
- Why did the Mathesons' work focus on organization and education? Why are these vital in any labor movement? Which specific achievements of the Mathesons' work are the most noteworthy?
- How did gender influence female workers' experiences? How did labor and management use gender in unionization efforts?
- How did globalization, outsourcing, organized crime, and sexism impact workers in Pennsylvania's garment industry? How do these forces impact workers today?

Public Sector Workers in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Francis Ryan's article on public sector workers allows teachers to engage students in a discussion of the modern labor movement. Labor strife does not exist just in the pages of history textbooks; it is alive and well in society today. This article may

provide teachers a jumping-off point for a discussion on dilemmas workers face today.

- After reading Ryan's article, ask students to bring in a recent news article that discusses a contemporary labor controversy.
- Engage students in a discussion comparing Ryan's article with the current event they located. Can they draw parallels between today's headlines and the labor disputes discussed in Ryan's article?
- Ask students to think of the dilemmas facing modern workers. What improvements would they like to see in the workplaces of the future? How are employers, government officials, and employees responding to the issues facing a modern workforce?

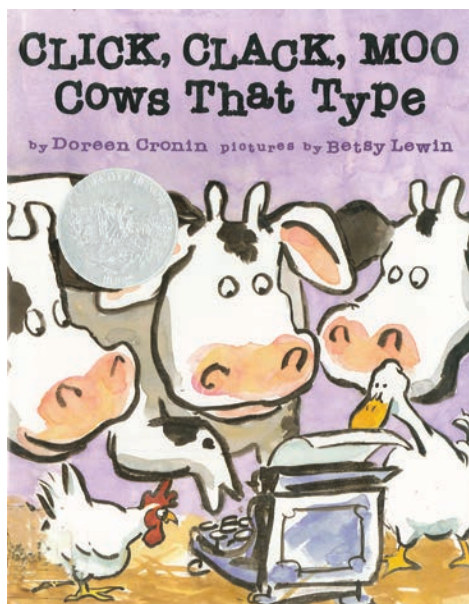
Together, these articles can help students put the experiences of today's workers, in the United States and around the world, into a larger context. They can spark discussions about the role of unions and other forms of labor organization—pro and con—in building our economy, protecting workers, promoting equity, and increasing opportunities. While the heyday of traditional industrial unions may be past, the issues they organized to address are still with us, in new forms, and an understanding of their history can—and should—inform how we address those problems today. ■

Karalyn McGrorty Derstine teaches US history at Gwynedd Mercy Academy in Lower Gwynedd, Pennsylvania.

LEGACIES FOR KIDS

Book Reviews

BY SARAH STIPPICH



Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type

By Doreen Cronin
Illustrated by Betsy Lewin
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers,
2000, unpagged. Ages 3–8.

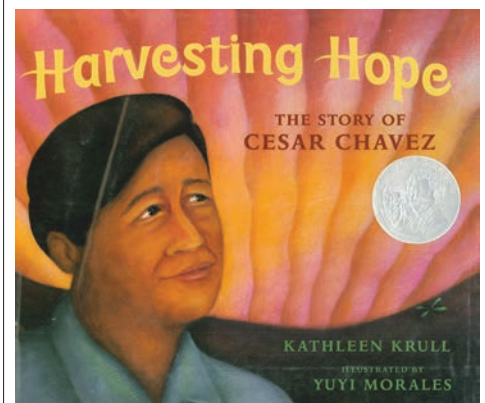
A new workers-rights classic, *Click, Clack, Moo* tells the story of cows who just won't take it anymore. After finding a typewriter, they tell Farmer Brown their demands and find solidarity with the hens. After tough negotiations (with neutral party Duck as go-between), they finally come to an amicable agreement. Lewin's watercolor illustrations match the fun, goofy story, with frequent refrains of "Click, Clack, Moo."



These Hands

By Margaret H. Mason
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper
Houghton Mifflin Books for Children,
2010, unpagged. Ages 3–8.

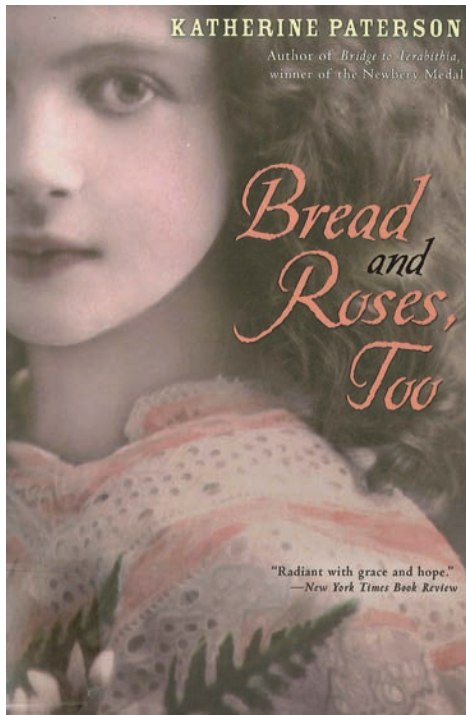
Joseph's grandfather's hands can do a lot: tie a triple bowline knot, play the piano, and throw a mean curve ball. But when he worked at the Wonder Bread factory, he was only allowed to sweep the floors and fix the machines because the bosses told him that white people would not want to buy bread that had been touched by black hands. Based on true events, Mason's story conveys the history of working conditions for African Americans before the Civil Rights Act was passed. Mason's text is perfect for younger children and Cooper's soft, sepia-toned illustrations are remarkable.



Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez

By Kathleen Krull
Illustrated by Yuyi Morales
Harcourt, Inc., 2003, unpagged. Ages 5–12.

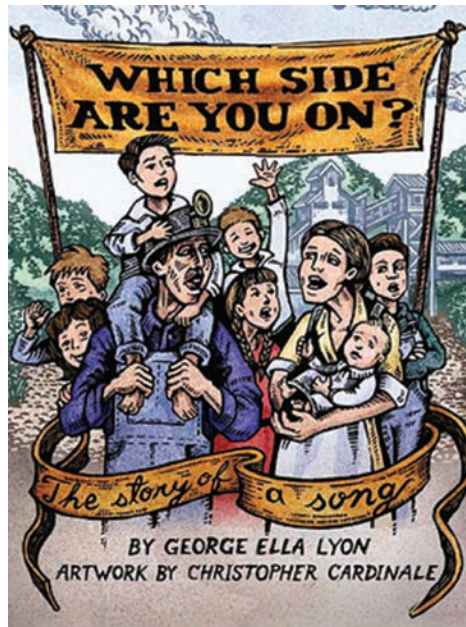
This lush picture-book biography traces Cesar Chavez's life from his childhood on a beautiful Arizona ranch to his years as a migrant worker in harsh conditions, on to his fight for fair worker's rights with the National Farm Workers Association. Cesar grew up as a shy boy who was humiliated when he spoke Spanish in school, but he learned to inspire people to fight for their rights with dignity and passion. His dedication to nonviolent struggle and his sincere perseverance are reflected in Morales's illustrations. An afterword expounds on the rest of Chavez's life and his impact to this day on labor rights.



Bread and Roses, Too

By Katherine Paterson
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006, 275 pp.
 Ages 8–12.

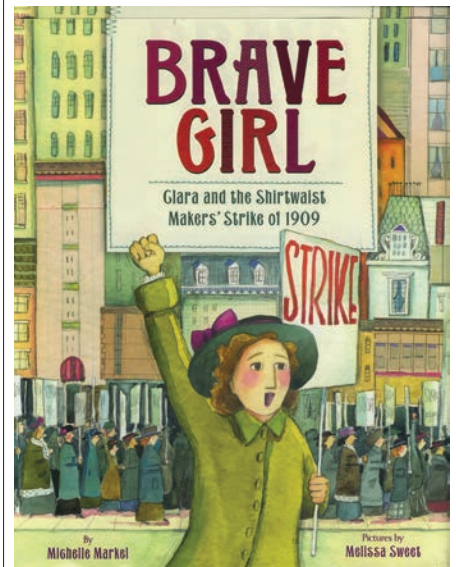
What was it like to be a child during some of the bloodiest labor struggles in American history? Paterson’s tale follows the parallel stories of Jake, a boy escaping from an abusive, alcoholic father and Rosa, whose Italian immigrant mother is on the front lines of the mill workers’ strikes. Forced to grow up quickly and caught up in a terrifying fight for equal rights, the two children form an unlikely friendship. When the children of mill workers are sent to live in safety in Vermont, they are both given a second chance to decide their role in the strike and in their lives. *Bread and Roses, Too* captures the doubts, fears, and, ultimately, the hope of the two children.



**Which Side Are You On?
 The Story of a Song**

By George Ella Lyon
 Illustrated by Christopher Cardinale
Cinco Puntos Press, 2011, unpagged. Ages 5–12.

In May 1931, Florence Reece distracted her children from a rain of bullets from union-busting thugs by writing and singing a song that would become famous all over the world. Her husband, Sam, was a coal miner in Harlan County, Kentucky, loyal to the newly formed unions, and she was at home with seven kids, fretting over the lack of basic safety and forced to use company store scrip for their needs. Both author Lyon, who was raised in Harlan County, and comic artist Cardinale have been involved in activist struggles. The Reece family’s story, illustrated by Cardinale’s linocut-style artwork, is interwoven with the words of Florence’s song, “Which Side Are You On?” More information is found in the author’s note and bibliography, which includes a website where readers can hear Florence sing her song.



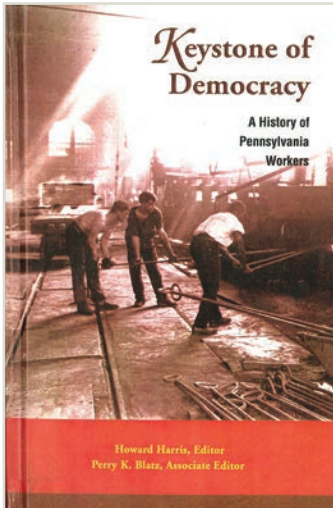
Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909

By Michelle Markel
 Illustrated by Melissa Sweet
Balzer & Bray, 2013, unpagged. Ages 5–12.

Clara Lemlich, a 12-year-old Jewish immigrant, didn’t believe it when her male counterparts in the union said that girls were not tough enough to strike. So she proved them wrong. Outspoken, proud, and determined, young Clara encouraged the women who worked in the shirtwaist factories to stand up for their rights by striking and walking out. After all, “warriors can wear skirts and blouses, and the bravest hearts may beat in girls only five feet tall.” Sweet’s mix of watercolors and paper and fabric collage (sometimes sewn together) is visually striking. Further information about the garment industry and an extensive bibliography follows.

BOOK REVIEWS

BY RACHEL MOLOSHOK



Keystone of Democracy: A History of Pennsylvania Workers

Edited by Howard Harris

*Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania/
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission,
1999*

This book's six chapters and 18 "Keystone vignettes" on people and events in Pennsylvania labor history make clear that industry—and the workers who made this industry possible—has shaped American history from the start and illuminate how Pennsylvania workers have consistently been at the forefront of shaping this history. From the earliest days of the colonial and revolutionary periods, Pennsylvania's position as the center of artisanal labor meant that "nowhere else did workers play more central a role in the establishment of the new republican order." By the 1900s, iron, coal, and railroad industries—essential to American expansion and the nation's emergence as an industrial and technological superpower—"had made Pennsylvania central to the American economy and transformed the state into a locus for labor conflict." It would be in Pennsylvania that some of the most dramatic chapters of American labor history would play out, including the Homestead lockout, the railroad strikes of 1877, the Lattimer Massacre, coal strikes, and the Pennsylvania-centered Steel Strike of 1919. By tracing the stories of Pennsylvania workers from the colonial period through the last years of the 20th century, the book's authors and editors tell a story not just of labor in Pennsylvania but of how "the Commonwealth's working men and women have led the struggle for economic and political justice on both the state and national levels."

Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia

By Peter Cole

Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007

During the Progressive Era, American longshoremen performed dangerous and back-breaking labor. Hiring was highly segregated along racial and ethnic lines, with African American workers forced into the worst jobs for the least pay. Few unions of the time allowed black

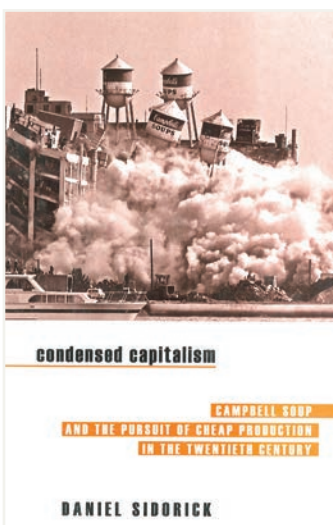
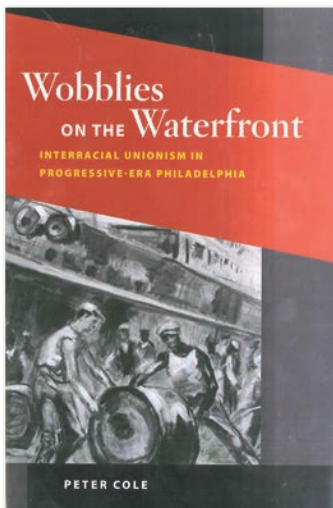
members, and "white workers feared blacks as strikebreakers more than as unionists." Philadelphia was the exception. In this city, black and white longshoremen worked "side by side, on the docks and in their union," the International Workers of the World (IWW)-affiliated Local 8. "Who were these workers who shockingly broke the racist traditions firmly in place along waterfronts, shop floors, offices, and stores in Philadelphia? How did their organization manage to bridge ethnic, national, and racial divides that few other unions dared cross?" These are the questions Peter Cole asks as he seeks to rescue this extraordinary union from "historical obscurity." In an inspiring narrative, he details how the IWW's commitment to "radical egalitarianism" provided strength and cohesiveness to the workers of Local 8, encouraging dockworkers from diverse backgrounds "to maintain a united front against their employers, government, and rival unions."

Condensed Capitalism: Campbell Soup and the Pursuit of Cheap Production in the Twentieth Century

By Daniel Sidorick

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009

For much of the 20th century, as many corporations abandoned their home cities to move to locations where labor was cheap and unions were weak, Campbell Soup was unable to leave Camden; the southern New Jersey-farmed tomatoes on which they relied had to be processed within hours of harvesting. Nonetheless, the company kept down its production costs by automating as much of the production process as possible, demanding ever-increasing and ever-faster outputs from its laborers, and dealing harshly with demands for higher wages and better conditions. Campbell undermined employee solidarity by pitting groups of workers against each other, importing temporary and immigrant laborers who would accept lower pay, and embracing vicious antiunionism. Campbell's workers, however, fought back. Despite management's best efforts, the employees were not easily divided. In particular, Local 80 of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America was a powerful force that united workers across ethnic,



racial, and gender lines, allowing Campbell employees to face their managers “more or less as equals” for decades. The contending forces of “management’s drive of low-cost production and employees’ attempts to achieve some control over their working lives and livelihoods” are the focus of Daniel Sidorick’s book.

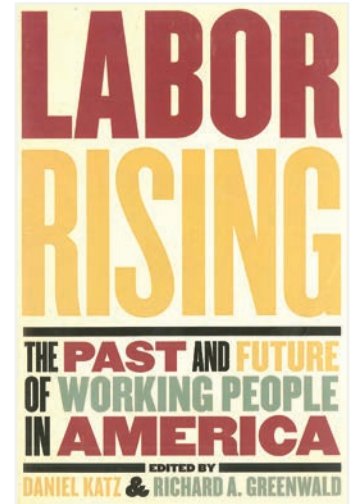
Labor Rising: The Past and Future of Working People in America

Edited by Daniel Katz and Richard A. Greenwald

New York: The New Press, 2012

How can lessons from labor’s past be applied today? This edited volume looks to the triumphs and tribulations of the American labor movement’s history in order to provide insights about its future. The foreword by Alice Kessler Harris and introduction by the editors paint a bleak picture. Manufacturing has largely been moved to the developing world, where workers are paid less and enjoy fewer protections, while in the United

States, government regulation and the social safety net have been significantly dismantled. American workers work longer hours than their forebears while not having seen a “real raise” since 1979, and more undocumented immigrant and “contingent” workers struggle to subsist on the margins of the economy. And yet, *Labor Rising* insists, there is reason for hope. “We have been here before,” Katz and Greenwald tell us, and “as scholars of labor’s past, we are well aware that small, perhaps even seemingly isolated, moments of resistance . . . can turn out to be the foundations on which future organizations are built.” The book’s editors and 24 contributors believe American workers “are now living through one of these transformational moments,” and although workers’ organizations and movements for justice and security for working people will not necessarily look like the labor unions of past generations, a new labor movement will rise, one that is “simultaneously transnational and community-based, that is fully inclusive and supports a broad social agenda, and that will lead toward greater democracy.”



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INTERESTING PLACES TO EXPLORE ON THE WEB

Stories from PA History: Labor’s Struggle to Organize

explorepahistory.com/story.php?storyId=1-9-22

This informative section of ExplorePAHistory.com provides a helpful overview of labor history in Pennsylvania from the 1700s to the present in four broad “chapters,” supplemented richly by historic images and documents (including both images and transcriptions), PHMC historical markers, lesson plans, a timeline, and copious suggestions for further reading.

Labor History Links

www.laborhistorylinks.org

Effectively the internet’s fullest encyclopedia of online labor history resources. Developed by Professor Rosemary Feurer for the Labor and Working Class History Association, the site’s strength lies in its comprehensive and continuously updated substance, rather than style. Teachers, researchers, students, and members of the reading public looking for primary sources, historical overviews, or links to websites on any aspect of labor history will find something here . . . and will keep clicking and reading as the links take them down unexpected avenues of inquiry.

Pittsburgh & Western Pennsylvania Labor Legacy

www.library.pitt.edu/labor_legacy/index.html

Debuted in 1999 and updated through 2003, the goal of the Labor Legacy Web site is to “map” the history of organized labor in Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. It is intended to be useful for “both the academic and the general public” but seems geared more toward the former. For researchers with a particular trade, organization, or individual in mind, however, it provides an invaluable resource. The site boasts a databank of over 500 regional labor organizations, scanned document sets from labor collections at the University of Pittsburgh’s Archives Service Center, contextual information on labor history from eras spanning from the 1880s to 2000, and profiles of significant trades, organizations, people, places, and events.

The ILGWU: Social Unionism in Action

www.laborarts.org/exhibits/ilgwu/

A visually arresting, highly interactive site developed by Labor Arts, a “virtual museum designed to gather, identify, and display examples of the cultural and artistic history of working people and to celebrate the trade union movement’s contributions to that history,” this online exhibit showcases diverse media such as flyers, cartoons, advertisements, photographs, songs, and quilts to explore how the ILGWU responded to key issues facing working people—including immigration, civil rights, healthcare—for over a century.

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Labor Today

BY DOROTHY SUE COBBLE AND MICHAEL MERRILL

Is the labor movement a relic from an earlier time, no longer suited to the modern world? Some say yes. When workers faced tyrannical bosses and few options for advancement on their own, the story goes, unions were a necessary evil. But today's well-educated and wired workers can fend for themselves. The declining proportion of the US workforce that is unionized would seem to support this viewpoint. In 1954, 1 out of every 3 American wage earners in the private sector belonged to a union; 60 years later, this number is less than 1 in 10.

We believe this common story of obsolescence and decline is wrong—that it mistakes a small part of the labor movement for the whole and ends up writing an obituary for a movement that in fact is still very much alive.



Members of AFSCME Local 29 in Pittsburgh protest against a lockout, 1985. Courtesy of Walter R. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

Some of the confusion stems from thinking that the small numbers of private sector union members reported in official government statistics represent the whole of the labor movement. True, currently only 6 percent of the nation's private sector workers are covered by a collective bargaining contract. But that

oft-cited figure actually tells us little about the American labor movement. For one, it refers just to unionized workers in the private sector and completely misses the millions of school teachers, bus drivers, firefighters, police officers, nurses, social workers, and other public sector workers who also belong to trade unions—altogether, some 35 percent of all those employed by the federal, state, or municipal government in 2013. Just as important, the official government statistics on union membership—even those that include both public and private sector workers—capture contract unionism only; that is, they track only those organizations recognized under the National Labor Relations Act as the bargaining agents for employees at a given worksite. Rendered invisible in these numbers is the other, “unofficial” labor movement that has always existed alongside official unions.

In the late 19th century, for example, while the Knights of Labor (the largest labor organization) and the American Federation of Labor (its rival) sought and secured agreements with individual employers, the larger labor movement led the “producing classes”—an expansive category encompassing wage earners, small farmers, and business owners as well as the self-employed, unemployed, and unwaged—in nationwide campaigns for social reform. Consider the global upsurge for shorter hours sparked by the AFL's call for a national general strike for the eight-hour day on May 1, 1886, or the agitation for living wage laws by worker organizations and their allies in states and cities across the country in the same era—laws that were consistently voted in and just as consistently overturned by the courts.

In the 20th century, as collective bargaining unionism expanded during the “long New Deal” stretching from the 1930s to the 1970s, new worker associations sprang up as well, sometimes overlapping in goals and strategies with the official labor movement, sometimes not. In the 1970s, 9to5, a national association for office workers, pursued contracts with

individual employers through its union division, but it also launched a nationwide campaign to change how secretaries were treated at work. Through films such as *9 to 5*, starring Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda, and Lily Tomlin, “worst boss contests,” pay equity lawsuits, and an irreverent, attention-grabbing media send-up of National Secretaries Day, the organization won substantial pay raises and new respect and rights for the one-third of American women employed as clericals.

Today, the labor movement continues its efforts to secure union recognition from employers through innovative forms of organizing. At the same time, as it becomes increasingly difficult for workers to gain official recognition and secure a contract with an employer, the unofficial labor movement is in the midst of a revival. Some call this “alt-labor”; others simply speak of the “new mutualism.” Community-based worker centers that offer legal advice, education, and institutional support for political and economic collective advocacy by low-wage workers, especially immigrants, have multiplied rapidly over the last 20 years. While there were 5 such groups in 1992, by 2005 the number had jumped to 140, and by 2012 to 214.

Among the fruits of such efforts are the many living wage ordinances passed by local governments, the hundreds of thousands of marchers who thronged the streets of the nation's cities in May 2006 and again in May 2010 to demand equal rights for immigrants and other excluded workers, and the support for raising the minimum wage in New Jersey and elsewhere during the 2013 fall elections. In addition, freelance writers, taxi drivers, fashion models, domestic workers, retail and restaurant employees, and even car wash attendants—all groups once thought unorganizable—are pressing for recognition and rights and have created new organizations such as the 231,000 strong Freelancers Union, the Taxi Drivers Alliance, the Model Alliance, Domestic Workers United, and the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United. Most have chapters in multiple cities; some have organized themselves into national organizations; and a few operate as part of global unions and networks.

Some of the best and most successful organizing in the United States is thus going on outside of “official” channels, even though much of it is receiving increasing



OUR Walmart demonstration, 2011. Photo courtesy of Marc F. Henning, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/legalcode>.

support from the official labor movement. The United Food and Commercial Workers, for example, has provided ongoing support to OUR Walmart, a national drive to upgrade conditions at Walmart, where workers earn below-poverty-line wages and routinely turn to food stamps and other government aid. The Service Employees International Union has encouraged the efforts to organize fast-food workers. Construction unions, especially the Laborers' International Union of North America, have supported worker centers and other alliances among immigrant day laborers. The list goes on. These efforts are so widespread and so energetic that the AFL-CIO recently resolved to open its doors to such groups more widely, deciding at its 2013 convention in Los Angeles to affiliate community-based advocacy and membership organizations that share its basic aims and principles.

None of this should be surprising. Buying power and real income for the majority of people have declined over the last half century while the top tier, particularly the

top 1 percent, has seen its wealth skyrocket. Risk has shifted as well; debt for education and training grows while the promise of economic security and upward mobility diminishes. Only those at the very top enjoy "golden parachutes" when they are fired and multi-million-dollar bonuses when their companies declare bankruptcy or face charges of fraud and other illegal activities.

Finally, the upsurge of worker organizing is not limited to the United States. Global trade union membership (excluding China) now stands at 193 million workers worldwide, up from 98 million in 1970—and these figures, of course, leave out the many new noncontract labor organizations around the world that advance worker rights outside collective bargaining structures. Often led by historically marginalized groups—women, immigrants, and racial and ethnic minorities—these new unions are demanding economic and social rights, such as access to credit and education, an end to discrimination, social inclusion, and citizenship rights. They are also at the

forefront of movements for democracy and political reform in South America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Worker movements today, in the United States and around the world, are on the rise. Workers have always organized collectively to secure for themselves the rights, recognitions, and rewards that are their due, and they will continue to do so. The 21st century promises to be among the most exciting chapters in the history of labor ever written. ■

*Dorothy Sue Cobble is Distinguished Professor of History and Labor Studies at Rutgers University. Her most recent book, co-authored with Linda Gordon and Astrid Henry, is *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements* (2014). Michael Merrill is dean of the Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, SUNY Empire State College. His most recent publication, "E. P. Thompson's Capital: Political Economy in The Making," appeared in the spring 2013 issue of *Labour/Le Travail*.*

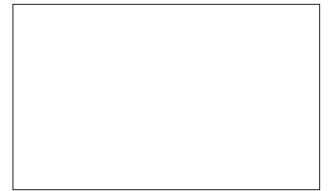


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United Electrical workers, on strike against General Electric, march through Philadelphia City Hall, March 1946. Philadelphia Record Photograph Collection.

