

ORGANIZED LABOR IN MAYNARD

Worker's Associations to protect and augment economic benefits and conditions go way back to the eighteenth century in America. However, these until after the Civil War, were individual attempts in single factories and plants to better their plight. The 1870's brought the Knights of Labor into being in the mine-fields of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The members of this union were mostly immigrant Irish. With the old country blood still fresh in their veins, they gave the mine-owners the same medicine that was meted out to them - tar and feathers, assassinations, terror in all its forms. By the mid-eighties the new American Federation of Labor absorbed the remnants of this organization representing the largest labor group until the advent of the Committee for Industrial Organization (C.I.O.) in the mid 1930's.

Source material prior to 1900 being missing, we can only conjecture that Maynard and the Assabet Manufacturing Company had its share of labor turmoil. With the advent of the American Woolen Company on the scene in 1899 and the feverish industrial activity ensuing from this giant of the textile industry, the war between the Maynard wage earners and the only industry started in earnest. However, the power of the company was such, that for 50 years it was able to keep at bay the unions that came and went, doling out pittance only. The composition of the labor force in the mill, being of many national strains, freshly ^{EMIGRATED} ~~immigrated~~ from the old country, speaking only their own language, militated against the unions becoming powerful enough to deal as equals with the employer.

The skilled workers were the first to organize. The spinners, according to the newspaper article of Jan. 31, 1902, had been organized under the management of Assabet Mfg. Co., have been reorganized now on a local basis to deal with the new management. The loom-fixers, mule-fixers, mule-spinners, weavers, all organized during the ensuing decade either as independent or part of the A.F.L. The spinners, 60 of them, struck on Jan. 17, 1902 for extra pay for overtime, causing the entire mill (1000 employees) to close. President Wood and Superintendent Hinchcliffe agree to union demands after threatening to move work to their other mills. A year later, Jan. 9, 1903 the spinners (118 of them) leave work again complaining the \$10.44 they

earn a week is not enough. - Company agrees to union demands of \$12.00 a week after a 5 day strike. Union Committee was composed of G. Morris, John H. Murray, Joseph Sales, Sylvester Sullivan, Thomas Beck, Archie Stoddard. Jan 16, 1903 the spinners and loom-fixers join the Marlboro Labor Council and the A.F. of L. Installation of officers on Jan 27, 1905 of the loom-fixers has Jesse Porter, President; Edward Titley, Vice-President; Joshua Edward, Secretary; John H. Maley, Recording-Secretary; John McDonald, Doorkeeper; Henry Connors, Sergeant. Work stoppages occurred sporadically in the unskilled departments during these years but without an organization to back them, were short-lived.

April 14, 1911 the Finn operatives hold a meeting at Music Hall with both Finnish and English speakers. The cause for this meeting had to do with the recent strike among strippers which resulted in the Finns being fired and Poles replacing them. March 9, 1913 newsnote tells of the loom-fixers and Mule-fixers combining in one union. A little social life enters into the drab life of the spinners for on May 9, 1913 a Concert and Ball is held with Collins Orchestra playing. Dec.19,1913 the mule-spinners, local 787, have installation of officers at Odd Fellows Hall. Jan. 9, 1914 loom-fix local 401 install officers: President, John Webster; Vice-President, Harry Hargreaves; Fin.Secretary, George Waterhouse; Treasurer, Jeremiah Kelley; Recording-Secretary, George Siswick; Conductor, John McDonald; Warden, Joseph Rollinson; Trustees, John Maley, Felix Rainville, George Siswick. Aug. 7, 1914 finds the loom-fixers, spinners and weavers meeting at Parker Street Hall to plan for Labor Day parade to Crowe Park. This was the first Labor Day celebration by organized labor in Maynard continuing annually through 1919. Led by the Imatra Band with Marshal Bernard Garrigan and Nicolai Katava as standard bearer, 300 union members marched. The loom-fixers had the above mentioned officers leading them; The spinners by President Thomas Breck; Vice-President Pat Lanigan; Fin-Secretary, Charles Spence; Recording-Sec, Ernest Thane; Treasurer, Ed Woodridge. The Weavers by President, Oscar Grondahl; Vice-President, Hjalmar Weckstrom; Secretary, Arthur Lindfors; Treasurer, Hannes Lahti, Conductor, Matti Autio. A ball game, track and field events, speeches against the 54 hour week and music kept the 1000 people occupied. Nov. 13, 1914 the Central Labor Union holds

meeting at Parker Strett Hall and Hibernian Hall for the purpose of organizing all textile workers into the A.F. of L. From this flowed the organization of the sewers (Dec. 4, 1914) spoolers and drawing-girls (Dec. 18, 1914) and the burlers. The carpenters local No. 1418 hold monthly meetings at Cannons Hall (Aug. 13, 1915). Aug 11 & 18, 1916 the fulling dept and the picker room (mostly Polish) refuse to work during noon hour. Although unorganized they struck and Superintendent Drechsler shuts down mill. 600 poles meet and organize into Polish Local of the A.F.L.

The english-speaking local is composed of dry-finish, wet-finish, picker room, card-room and shipping room. Dry and wet finish union leaders were Fred Palmer, vice-president; fin-secretary, Pat McGrath; Treasurer, Jesse Billet; Recording-Secretary, C.E. Greenhalge. The A.F.L. organizer gets the men back to work while negotiations are taking place - adjustments are made but no wage increases. The newspaper reports that the second hands made workers bring vegetables to them plus pay them for their jobs. The same reports says the Italian and Polish women being organized. An interesting side-light on inner union strife came out on Sept. 8, 1916 with John Golden, International President of the United Textile Workers, A.F.L. joins the Maynard mule-spinners local 787 as his own local in Fall River has seceded from the union. Oct. 6, 1916 the sewers local officers are - Miss Katie Powers, Martha Parker, Margaret Leyden, Eva Tucker, Mary Driscoll and Mrs. Margaret May. Oct. 27, 1916 delegates to the National Convention are Thomas Breck, Joseph Parkin, Andy Hautamäki, Mrs. Catherine Lyons and Miss Mary Driscoll. Dec. 8, 1916 officers of the dry finish and shippers are William Brindley, Ed McManus, Ed Ryan, Pat McGrath, Michael Kane and Thomas Fowler. Dec. 8, 1916 officers of drawers, spoolers, dressers local are Thom. Smith, Esther Emanuelson, Mrs. Emily Bamford, Miss Catherine Wilder, Herbert Usner, Alice White and Hazel Callahan.

After the first world war, Feb. 7, 1919 the textile union demand was for the 8 hour day, 48 hours a week and time and a half for overtime. The company accepted this but as the company was only on a 4 day week it didn't make too much difference. The union committee was Bernard Garrigan, Thomas Smith and Bert Smith.

This was the beginning of a turbulent decade and a half in labor relations - good times, bad times, both reacted on the weakness and strength of the local unions.

On top of this, the division between the conservative and radical union members was so deep that American Woolen had no difficulty in keeping both in line. Feb.11, 1919 several hundred people gather on Glendale Street for a mass meeting to hear speakers talk on labor troubles in Lawrence. \$200 was raised for Lawrence strikers. Apr.18,1919 another meeting took place on Walnut Street. May 9, 1919 organizers are reported in town to organize a separate union from the United Textile Workers. May 23, 1919 American Woolen gave a 15% raise to mill employees - this was negotiated by the U.T.W. in Feb. of that year when the 8 hour day was negotiated. This belated raise apparently was given then to strengthen the U.T.W. as against the new radical union being organized. The U.T.W. was weak at this period for a news note of Sept. 5, 1919 tells of the Labor Day parade to Crowe Park in which only the spinners union with a platoon of police and the Imatra and National Bands were present - no Polish or Finnish unionists present. Two months later Nov.21,1919 seven hundred weavers walk out in protest against working with non-union weavers. President Golden of the U.T.W. comes into town for discussions. Agent Drechsler of the company says U.T.W. wants a closed shop which the U.T.W. denies - it only wants the alleged non-union members (who are members of the new radical Amalgamated Textile Workers Union) to join the U.T.W. The company declares that it cannot do this - that 3000 employees will be out of work consequently. 200 members of the amalgamated meet in Polish Hall on Parker Street - they are still at work. They insist that the U.T.W. wants to destroy the amalgamated and the walk-out was for that purpose.

The company refused to negotiate with the national officers of the U.T.W. (Nov.28, 1919) the weavers remain out but the rest of the U.T.W. locals remain in until laid off. The spinners meet (Nov.21,1919) and decide that spare spinners can only get work by reporting every morning to see if a regular spinner is out. Dec.5,1919 news note reports that agent Drechsler decides to keep mill open. The article indicates that the company purpose is to break the union movement by keeping the two unions at each others throats. The weavers committee was composed of Edwin Carleton, Frank Parks, Francis Johnstone and Henry Slyvert. The company by O.C.Drechsler and Edwin Toop. Actually only 45 weavers belong to the Amalgamated Textile Workers and 616 to the United Textile Workers. Arthur Siipola was the local head of the Amalgamated (Dec.19,1919)

The Weavers strike ended after six weeks with concessions by both company and the U.T.W. (Dec. 26, 1919) The so-called non-union weavers were segregated onto the first floor of No. 5 mill; the company recognized the U.T.W. national officers; the union did not demand the closed shop. All in all, the company, by having two antagonistic unions, was the winner of that ball game.

The amalgamated continued to organize and meet but on Mar. 5, 1920 a meeting at Polish Hall on Parker Street was broken up by chief of police Binks and union literature was confiscated. The civil liberties union entered this case as it was a flagrant abuse of police power. On May 7, 1920 the amalgamated demanded a 44 hr. week and a 50% raise in wages with the implied threat that if these were not forthcoming it would close the woolen departments and wet finishing departments causing the whole mill to close. The company countered with an offer of 17-1/2% raise. The U.T.W., which controlled at this time other departments, was happy and the anticipated strike did not materialize as the amalgamated would have needed the support of the U.T.W. membership. Also hard times were starting again.

Starting in 1922 the fortunes of both unions was at a low level until 1931. The amalgamated disappeared by the end of that year. The U.T.W. held various organizational meetings during those years but remained weak and ineffectual. Feb. 10, 1922 the sowers tried to reorganize. Mar 24, 1922 U.T.W. holds mass meeting in Coop Hall with Finnish and English speakers. July 31, 1925 seven hundred meet at Crowe Park for a U.T.W. mass meeting with Pres. Francis Johnstone presiding - wage cuts the issue. The spinners and weavers complain they have been on short time for 6 months - 2 days a week. Weekly meetings were held that year with different departments but nothing seemed to have come of it. Feb. 17, 1928 another organizing campaign was started by the U.T.W. Mar. 16, 1928 an audience of 300 at Coop Hall heard Thomas Ragan, organizer, Joe Bozek in Polish and John Hill in Finnish. Spinners union objects to 10 hr. day for women. Aug. 3, 1928 the U.T.W. holds field days at Voses Park with the United Concert Band for music. Oct. 19, 1928 Maynard Textile Council holds benefit dance at Waltham St. Hall for New Bedford strikers - an appeal being made for women's and children's clothing - Francis Johnstone to be contacted as receiver. Mar. 1, 1929 Maynard Textile Council was organized with 7 delegates each from three local unions - Thomas Breck, President;

Francis John Bone, Vice-President; Mrs. Albert White, Secretary and Harold Haskell as Treasurer. Oct. 31, 1930 local 771, Maynard Textile Council held a mass meeting at Parker St. Hall.

By Feb. 27, 1931 the situation had deteriorated to such an extent with the U.T.W. wringing its hands for the past 10 years with every wage cut and working condition worsened, that the new National Textile Workers Union, James P. Reid, organizer, was able to call a strike of the weavers. The demands were - return of 12-1/2% wage cut which was taken in Maynard only which the Maynard Textile Council U.T.W. had agreed to; end of the efficiency system whereby stop watches and pencil tapping of employees' movements were recorded; return of the 10% bonus for night work. The company disagrees so by the following week (Mar. 6, 1931) 500 pickets surrounded the mill. The company then confers with the U.T.W., agreeing to its terms of; "efficiency" out; and U.T.W. and company to discuss any changes in conditions and wages. This forces the smaller National Textile Workers Union to call off its strike with only partial demands met.

Next, we hear on Nov. 10, 1933 the U.T.W. in the person of Horace Riviera, holds a meeting at Parker St. Hall with 150 present to organize one big industrial union - no more craft unions. Another meeting follows on Dec. 1, 1933 at the same place. By Sept. 7, 1934 a general strike of all textile workers throughout the nation takes place and 1700 Maynard workers are with them. By Sept. 28, 1934 the strike is over and the mill resumes operations. Wages and conditions, union recognition were the points struck for. The officers elected by the industrial union were: William Hill, President; [unclear], Vice-Presidents, Thomas Maley, Tony Colombo, William Kitovicz; Sec.-Treasurer, Charles Spence; Rec.-Secretary John O'Leary; Conductor, John Moynihan.

By Oct. 6, 1939 the mill workers voted at a national labor board election, 1095-1004 to organize into the C.I.O. United Textile Workers Union. The Jan 10, 1941 list of officers of local 140 were: Re-elected President John O'Leary; Vice-President, Lester Cowles; Sec.-Treasurer, Miss Gladys Mikijanice; Rec.-Secretary, Miss Ann White; Trustees Robert Robblee, Elmer Mattson, Ben Bundalavich. Mar. 7, 1942 the local signed a 2 year no-strike or lock-out agreement, 10% increase in wages, minimum wage 40 cents an hour.

July 16, 1942 the union votes to buy a \$1000 War Bond and \$100 monthly thereafter. Officers at this time President John O'Leary; Vice-President Everett Sarvela; Sec.-Treasurer Gladys Mikijaniec; Rec.-Secretary Ann L. White; Trustees Elmer Mattson, John Robblee, Barney Bondelevitch; Sergeant Wilfred Riley.

This section of the paper concerning the union at American Woolen will be concluded after we have done additional research on the post second world war period. American Wholen closed shop in Maynard 1949-50 so the union disappeared at the same time.

We think that reading in chronological order the ups and downs of the labor unions in American Woolen, in retrospect there can be no disagreement with the statement that if the workers for 50 years could have gotten united and not allowed themselves to be divided by mutual hostilities and by the company, that Maynard and its people today would be much wealthier, healthier and happier.

If we retrace ourselves now, there were a few news notes concerning other union activity in Maynard.

Nov. 8, 1901 - Bartenders local holds dance.

Mar. 2, 1906 - Carpenters union admits 9 new members and discusses demands to be made of contractors.

Dec. 19, 1913 - Edgar Crannel, Secretary local 21, Marlboro, Cigar makers is in town to boost union label.

Aug. 13, 1915 - Carpenters local 1418 is holding monthly meetings at Masonic Hall.

Aug. 11, 1916 - Carpenters union elects; Sid Laffin, John Comeau, Thomas Tierney, Dan Dwyer, Dan Colbert, Nelson Roeder, Frank Prue, Adile Crook, Nelson Roeder, Walt Whitman.

Apr. 18, 1919 - Maynard telephone operators strike - local 12-A six operators in Maynard out - demands are; 1st - six months of service \$6.50 week - balance of year \$10.; 2nd to fifth year \$11 - maximum to be \$12, asking \$6 weekly increase.

Every now and then the barbers used to organize, we have been told, but it did not last.

Sept. 14, 1934 - Lovell Bus Lines unionized but John Lovell refused to bargain

with the amalgamated association of street and electrical employees of America, local
1084.

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