



The International Molder's Journal, February 1910

A Generation of Hope, Pain, and Heartbreak: The Worcester Molder's Union, 1904–1921

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Introduction: *Using digitized versions of journals such as the Iron Molders' Journal and the International Molders' Journal, American labor relations can be studied through case histories. Worcester, Massachusetts, became an industrial powerhouse by the mid-nineteenth century. In huge manufacturing companies, metal trades workers struggled to gain better living and working conditions. Labor unions experienced both success and failures. Two major strikes occurred. In 1899 the Iron Molders' Union had reached an arbitration and wage agreement with the National Founders' Association, called the New York Agreement. This agreement was abrogated in 1904 by the NFA, and the open shop was established, leading to a national strike which had a significant impact on the city of Worcester. Despite many obstacles, the Worcester Molder's Union fought for over a decade for better pay and better hours.*

During World War I, the National War Labor Board (NWLB) was established, but it was discontinued in March, 1919. With the demise of the NWLB, national and local manufacturers' organizations joined together to deny promised gains for the molders in terms of pay and hours. The Worcester molders struck in May 1919 after this denial. This bitter strike dragged on into 1920 and left both the union and the manufacturers in disarray in the city. Bruce Cohen, an Associate Professor of History at Worcester State University, chronicles this bitter history.

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Worcester, in Central Massachusetts, was a landlocked town of 7,500 people in 1840. It was not chartered as a city until 1848. By the 1850s, Worcester had become a leader in the boot and shoe industry. The city's industries soon attracted immigrants of primarily Irish, French, and Swedish descent in the mid-nineteenth century. By 1890, with a population of 85,000, Worcester became a "nationally known center of the metal and machine trades" and was the second-largest city in the state. In 1880, Washburn and Moen was already regarded as the largest wire factory in the United States; in 1900, when it merged into the American Steel and Wire Company, it had four thousand workers. While industrial diversity had been and would remain significant in Worcester, metal trades and machinery usually accounted for about 40% of the city's industrial output by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹

The metal trades industry, primarily iron molding, was developed in America in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1817. Despite the rise of steel after the Civil War, the iron industry continued to thrive. Iron molding, or casting, uses wood molds, or patterns, covered in sand to shape the molten iron as it cools. However, the most difficult part is removing the cooled cast iron from the pattern. Before the invention of molding machines, this process was performed entirely by hand. Interestingly, many foundries, or molding shops, still use a combination of machines and manual labor.²

Worcester's development as an industrial center was helped by two technological breakthroughs. In 1885, seven Worcester entrepreneurs established Norton Emery Wheel Company to manufacture the world's first grinding wheel. Originally made in a pottery shop, this grinding wheel was the first ceramic-bonded wheel to be precision-made and mass-produced. It revolutionized the metalworking industry by replacing the metal-cutting process with precision grinding. During the next century, the company changed its name to Norton Company and grew to become the world's

leading supplier of abrasives and high-performance materials. A spinoff, Norton Grinding, was established in 1900. In 1902, another local firm, Wyman-Gordon, founded in 1883, developed the first forged crankshaft for an automobile. Unlike other cities, Worcester retained a family identity. While the original founders of Wyman-Gordon were dead by 1914, the firm remained in Worcester hands. Other local mergers included Crompton and Knowles in 1897 and Reed-Prentice in 1912.³

American labor relations can be studied through case histories using digitized versions of journals such as the *Iron Molders' Journal* and the *International Molders' Journal*. In contrast to Worcester's industrial development, its labor force was not well organized, in part because firms like Norton Company and Washburn & Moen recruited skilled Swedish craftsmen, who were treated with paternalism by their employers. John Jepson, of Norton, for instance, was known for his paternalistic treatment of his employees, who quickly adjusted to the "Norton Spirit." The Norton Emery Wheel Company census of 1899 reveals that almost three-fourths of the employees, 152 of 208, were Swedish. As late as 1915, over one-fifth of American Steel and Wire's employees were Swedish.⁴

In broad strokes, the key events in the history of the Worcester Iron Molders' Union can be summarized as follows: In 1899, the Iron Molders' Union reached an arbitration and wage agreement (known as the New York Agreement) with the National Founders' Association. This agreement was abrogated in 1904 by the National Foundries' Association (NFA), and the open shop was established, leading to a national strike that had a significant impact on the city of Worcester, then known as the metal trades capital of New England.

An open shop is a nonunion shop and its establishment represented a defeat for the Iron Molders' Union. According to labor historians Robert E. Weir and James P. Hanlan, an open shop is a:

workplace that hires employees regardless of their union status. Individual employees may be union members and are legally free to join them, but the employer treats them as individuals and not members of a labor organization. The open shop is thus unorganized and nonunion.⁵

In contrast, a "closed" shop is a union shop, "a situation in which a worker is required to join a union as condition of employment."⁶

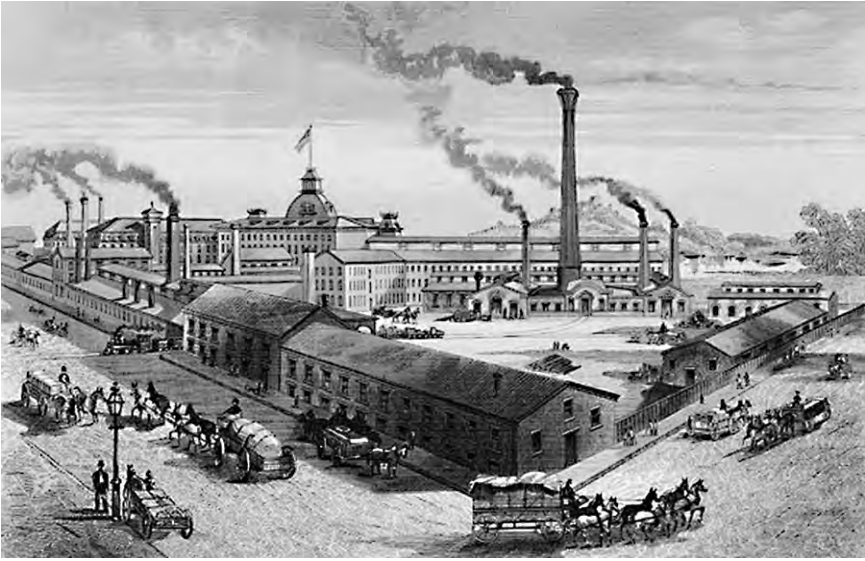
Despite many obstacles, including the New York Agreement's open-shop clause, the Worcester Molders' Union fought for over a decade for better

pay and better hours. During World War I, the National War Labor Board (NWLB) was established, but it was discontinued in March 1919. With the demise of the NWLB, the owners, represented by the National Metal Trades' Association (NMTA), National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), and NFA, joined with the local manufacturers to deny promised gains for the molders in terms of pay and hours. The Worcester molders struck in May 1919 after this denial. This bitter strike dragged on into 1920 and left both the union and the manufacturers in disarray in the city. The molders' union lost hundreds of members. By the end of the 1920s, there was only one large foundry left in Worcester.

LABOR HISTORY TO 1919

In his history of the International Molders' Union of North America, Frank Tenney Stockton states that early unionism in the molding industry was focused more on "specific grievances such as cuts in wages and abuses of the helper system."⁷ As the Civil War approached, a trend toward centralization occurred leading to the formation of the Iron Molders' International Union in 1863. By 1874 the name was changed to the Iron Molders' Union of North America (IMUNA). Despite the death of its founding father, William H. Sylvis, in 1868 and the financial panics and depressions of 1873 and 1893, the organization grew. In 1891, IMUNA leaders met with the Stove Founders' National Defense Association (SFNDA), a manufacturers association of foundrymen, in reference to the owners of the manufacturing businesses. In contrast to the National Founders' Association, the SFNDA was more moderate in terms of open shop policies. The IMUNA and the SFNDA hammered out an agreement that condemned both strikes and lockouts and endorsed the principle of arbitration, which became conciliation. In 1909 the union's name was changed to the International Molders' Union of North America (IMU).

Iron molding was a key component of Worcester's economy. By 1890, it had emerged as a "nationally known center of the metal and machine trades."⁸ According to Roy Rosenzweig, "metal trades and machinery contributed to about 90% of the city's industrial output by the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries."⁹ Despite the formation of the Worcester Molders' Union in 1859 and its engagement in a strike during the Civil War, the Worcester Local #5 ended its existence in 1866 and was not reorganized as Local #5 until 1890 because of the decline of the molders' union and the growth of the Knights of Labor.



Washburn & Moen Manufacturing Company

Founded in 1831 in Worcester, Washburn & Moen was one of the nation's leading manufacturers of wire and related products, including telegraph wire and barbed wire (for which the company acquired a manufacturing monopoly). These were used in large quantities during America's westward expansion.

Shortly thereafter, there were several attempts to gain wage increases and reduced hours at Washburn & Moen, though they involved only a small number of workers and thus failed. The 1871 strike led to a reduction in hours, although Nick Salvatore questions whether this was accompanied by a reduction in wages. When Washburn & Moen attempted to reduce wages in 1877, the wire workers conceded, in part because only part of the labor force was affected. In 1880 there were additional labor problems for the firm; 250 men at Washburn & Moen's Quinsigamond Iron Works began a 45-day strike in December after wages were reduced ten percent. While the strike failed, it may have contributed to the attempt of the Knights of Labor LA 4979 to organize the firm. However, this chapter of the Knights of Labor disbanded in 1887 after unsuccessfully trying to organize Washburn & Moen. Attempts to gain pay increases in the 1880s are also worth noting. After the reestablishment of Local #5 of the IMU in 1890, workers at Washburn & Moen struck because of wage reduction and the policy that

male workers were “forced” to train women workers. This strike met with minimal success because the male workers resisted these efforts.¹⁰

By 1885, some of the iron molders and the core makers were part of the Knights of Labor LA 7073, the Iron Molders Assembly, remaining so until 1890. The molders then rejoined the IMU as Local #5 and the core makers became Local #15 of the Core Makers International Union. The core makers briefly formed their own chapter of the IMU, Local #434, before eventually merging with Local #5 in 1903.¹¹ However, there remained distinctions between molders and core makers based on skill and training, with the molders having more of both.

Local #5 was involved in several confrontations with manufacturers in 1899.¹² In January of 1899, the city’s Central Labor Union (CLU) called for stronger organization in view of a pending strike at the Pero Foundry, as well as a prior one there in the fall of 1898. In April of 1899, the IMU called for union recognition, abolition of piecework, and a minimum wage of \$3 per day by May 1. These demands led to a strike at the Worcester Boiler Works and a lockout at Rice, Barton and Fales. While the national leaders gained union recognition, organization of shop committees, and abolition



Rice, Barton and Fales

Rice, Barton and Fales was one of the nation’s leading manufacturers of paper-making machinery. The company was started in 1837 by two paper makers in Worcester.

of piecework, the minimum wage remained a divisive issue. Despite six foundrymen being willing to grant a minimum wage of \$3, a conference between the National Foundries Association (NFA) and the IMU led to an agreement to retain the prevailing wage of \$2.75. It was remarked that “some of the best workmen crossed the line at Rice, Barton and Fales” and “the Iron Molders paid striking molders their weekly wages out of the union’s fund.” These comments and others like them very well may have contributed to the settlement, particularly in terms of Holyoke Machine Co.¹³

The local molders’ union chose not to go out on strike in 1901, despite grievances with local foundries. However, a new agreement was drawn up in May 1902, which included a \$3 minimum wage. In 1904, the NFA annulled the New York agreement of 1899, which provided for arbitration and annual wage agreements. The rejection of a compromise of reduced wages for shorter hours and the ensuing wage cut of 25 cents induced the National Unionized Molders to strike, and local Worcester molders joined in.¹⁴

In Worcester, the nationwide 1904 strike began on June 23, involving two hundred fifty molders and core makers in five shops. However, one of the largest shops, Colvin, withdrew its reduction and reestablished the former rate. While the strike was considered a failure, some molders stayed out until 1905. After the strike, some foundries such as Reed became open shops, a trend endorsed by the NFA.¹⁵ In his 1921 study, *International Molders’ Union of North America*, Frank T. Stockton defines the role of the NFA as an antiunion and open-shop organization, in league with the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and the National Metal Trades Association (NMTA).¹⁶

Worcester molders faced an uphill battle from 1905 on, between an aggressive anti-union NFA and a declining economy. At least four shops remained on strike. By late November 1907, a letter from unionist molder John S. Gale stated that locals #5 and #434 had voted to merge as of January 1, 1908.¹⁷ The Worcester Iron Molders’ Union Local #5 held its fiftieth anniversary at the Ancient Order of Hibernians Hall on March 18, 1909. By that time, there was much discussion of the role of the NMTA in establishing an “identification system” for works that led to “scientific blacklisting.”¹⁸ Records were kept that evaluated workers on whether they were open- or closed-shop molders, along with their ethnic background and involvement in strikes.

By 1910, the economic recession had eased, and Worcester’s molders strived to gain an increase in the minimum wage. In June 1910, James H. Mellen, one of the founders of Local #5, died in Worcester after many years of service in union activities, including Knights of Labor as well as the IMU. He also served several terms in the state legislature as a proponent of labor

reform acts such as the first Factory Inspection Act, and as a publisher of *The Worcester Times* and *Mellen's Magazine*.¹⁹

In 1911, the Worcester molders faced new obstacles, including the abuse of female core makers and the introduction of the “Taylor system of scientific management.” Overshadowed by the Lawrence “Bread and Roses” strike in February 1912, the IMU engaged in a vigorous struggle to raise the minimum wage in the state as well as throughout New England to \$3/\$3.25 per day. By early 1913, through the efforts of the IMU’s Vice Presidents Keough and O’Leary in conference with the Stove Founders’ National Defense Fund (SFNDA), a pay raise was gained in Worcester for all but one shop force.²⁰ The Executive Board of the IMU established two additional conference boards for New England in May 1913, as the union’s momentum in the area increased.²¹

Around the same time, the *International Molders’ Journal (IMJ)* reported in several muckraking articles that the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) had engaged in corrupt and illegal activities including unconstitutional acts of lobbying, politicking, and strike-breaking that the AFL had brought to the attention of Congress.²² Still, as Eugene L. Murphy, business agent for the Eastern New England Conference Board, stated, “Surely 1912 to 1913 has been a period of progress for New England where, all told, our members in 32 local unions have secured an advance in wages.”²³ However, in that same issue, the IMJ reported that a strike was still on at Reed’s, James Colvin’s, and the Pero Shops. Other IMU Business Agents confirmed that general, although not universal, progress had been made in raising the minimum wage and lowering the hours of work from ten to nine a day.²⁴ [Contrary to what their name might imply, business agents were union staff “employed by a union local to negotiate with employers, help settle grievances, and see that both parties observe the terms of the collective bargaining agreement.”]²⁵

By 1914, the molders perceived that there was a sharp difference between negotiating with the NFA and the SFNDA. The “open shop” policy of the NFA dated back to 1904 when the organization broke with the IMU over the issues of minimum wage rate, ratio of apprentices, use of molding machines, and the use of arbitration in contested matters. However, with the slacking of trade by 1904 and the subsequent depression of 1907, the NFA turned to strikebreakers, established a spy system, and used a foundry foremen’s association as an antiunion tool. This procedure was nicknamed the “Los Angeles system” because it began in that area. According to the IMU, “its universal adoption was a part of the policy and program of the NMTA and

other employer's organization, and strenuous efforts were made to introduce it into every city."²⁶

When World War I broke out, Worcester's reputation, as a "City of Prosperity" dominated by a "Protestant Partnership" of Yankees and Swedes both operating through the Republican Party and the NMTA, was tested by both the machinists and the molders as they challenged the open-shop mentality. The Machinists' Strike of 1915 was hastily organized and poorly funded. Although supported by the Central Labor Union, which included the molders' union, only \$12,000 was collected for the strike fund, and the strike lasted only a few months.²⁷ One analyst concluded that there were class and craft delineations between the two: "The molders are considered in the labor world as being somewhat exclusive, indeed they appear especially so to some members of the Machinists' Union."²⁸ The molders also struck in 1915 over the discharge of a member of the shop committee.

The war years at first reflected the need for more production as well as the simultaneous need for replacement workers. Increasingly, there was the need to reassess wage scales as the war progressed. During the war, "competition with Worcester's booming machine tool, machinery, and metalworking industries limited the supply of skilled and steady workers," while rapid industrial growth and a "decline in immigration restricted Sweden's ability to supply labor as in the past." As a result, "full employment and high wages induced by the war accelerated labor independence and mobility." There were high turnover rates. The need to recruit non-Swedish immigrants, together with lack of persistence of these new immigrants, broke down the old ties of paternalism and loyalty and led to ethnic tensions, discrimination, and lower productivity.²⁹

By 1916, 85% of the NFA's members ran open shops. According to a contemporary observer, Margaret Loomis Stecker, "Association shops made increased use of unskilled or comparatively unskilled labor since 1904."³⁰ Despite the rise in open shops, unions were clearly still active in 1916, as evidenced by the major strike in Bridgeport that year. The Local #110 of the molders' union clashed with the Manufacturers' Iron Foundry and their supporters, the NFA, the NMTA, and the NAM, over the minimum wage, overtime, and recognition of the shop committee. The employers started a damage suit of \$200,000.³¹ Another strike in Nashua, New Hampshire, by Local #257 "for a living wage and better working conditions" was met by the foundrymen "declaring for open shops, individual dealings, unlimited apprentices, and unrestricted piecework."³²

According to the *International Molders' Journal*, 1917 brought significant gains in the minimum wage rate for the molders of New England, including

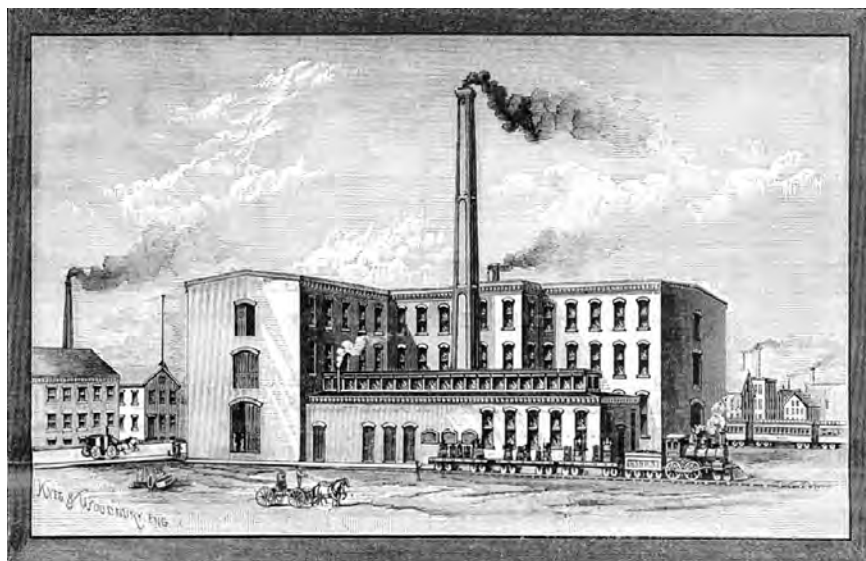
Bridgeport, in six of the eight struck shops. However, the IMU was worried by the “foundrymen’s efforts to establish a system — all molders would be hired through the secretary of the Employer’s Association.” Worcester Local #5 boasted approximately 700 members in June 1917. The manufacturers were also faced with the need to reassess wage scales for different reasons. As the war progressed, the federal government set up boards governing labor-management relations. In December 1917, Vice President O’Leary reported after a trip to Washington that “the 8 hour day had been gained in certain government work made in private foundries.”³³

In 1918, after the National War Labor Board was established, Worcester’s molders sought an eight-hour day, and an increase of fifty-five cents a day, up from the \$5.25 they had gained as of June 1918. The foundrymen, led by Charles Hildreth, countered in September with an offer of \$5.50. Conciliator Skeffington of the United States Labor Department was unable to bring about a compromise between the two sides. Upon the recommendation of Skeffington, after a final conference held October 21 failed to reach agreement on wages and hours, the molders’ union turned to the NLRB for help. Formal complaints were filed on November 7 against fifteen foundries. Only the Pero Foundry agreed to a joint submission to the board. This meant that the board could make an award only in the Pero case. In that case, both parties agreed to a determination by the board concerning wages and hours. In the other cases, the board could only make a recommendation.³⁴

THE STRIKE OF 1919–1920

Finally on March 26, 1919, the board awarded a wage increase from \$5.25 to \$5.80 for the Pero molders and recommended the same wage rate in the fourteen other cases, effective October 1, 1918, and continuing until April 1, 1919. Retroactive payment was to be made by May 1, 1919.³⁵ This was a significant victory for the workers. When the employers refused to pay the increase, some 500 molders walked out of fifteen shops. In addition, the workers at Rice, Barton and Fales were locked out on the same day, and the “tie up at Reed-Prentice was almost complete by May 13.”³⁶ At least 100 men joined Local #5 during the first week of the strike, and 200 “helpers” formed a new supportive union. Altogether, 750 workers were out of work because of the strike.

Strikebreakers were brought in by Holyoke and Reed-Prentice, and the *Labor News* accused the NFA of being a strikebreaker’s agency. The struck foundries were accused also of sending work to Palmer, Hartford, and Springfield. The strikers also pointed to settlements with foundries in



Holyoke Machine Co.

This was one of nine foundries in Worcester that declared itself an “open shop” during a strike in December 1919. Undated image.

Lowell and Lawrence and thus to the possibility of finding jobs elsewhere.³⁷ Injunctive relief was sought by Holyoke and Reed-Prentice, and this struggle cost Local #5 and the IMU heavily (\$1,623.19).³⁸

The Worcester Molders’ Strike of 1919 was partially settled by the fall with pay increases at Pond, Star, and Standard Foundries.³⁹ While many of the molders had left the city for outside jobs, settlements were also reached in October at Pero and Rice, Barton and Fales, although no details of the settlements were released.⁴⁰ Bitterness remained between the Molders’ Union and the local Metal Trades Association, which was assailed for its “antagonistic influence in preventing a settlement, including threatening to boycott any foundries which settled.”⁴¹

Nine foundries issued an “open shop” declaration on December 2, 1919, but the *Labor News* reported that the strike was still on at those foundries, including Coppus, Holyoke, Reed-Prentice, and Whitcomb Blaisdell. *Labor News* also reported in the December 19 issue that Worcester’s molders had not gained the eight-hour day that had been won in fifty-one of the fifty-eight Northeastern cities. At least six foundries were still out in January,

1920. Twenty miles away, the Fitchburg molders were also still fighting for the eight-hour day.⁴² This was a regional strike.

While the employees called for an eight-hour day because “the arduous, laborious and fatiguing nature of their work has for many years demanded consideration of a shorter day,” the board did not address the issue.⁴³ Ultimately, after short-lived strikes, the \$5.80 rate for the eight-hour day was accepted by the Foundrymen’s Association in most of the large cities of New England. Four major exceptions to this scenario were Holyoke, Lowell, and Worcester in Massachusetts, and Norwich, Connecticut. Thus, in Worcester, the foundrymen refused to accept the board’s award and recommendation of March 26.⁴⁴ The National War Labor Board, at least in theory, encouraged the right of employees to organize unions and of shop committees to engage in collective bargaining with employers on issues like wages and hours. In reality, however, the board was reluctant to deal with the eight-hour day issue except where there was defense work involved and the employer refused to engage in collective bargaining. In Worcester, two large firms, Rockwood Sprinkler and Graton and Knight, accepted the eight-hour day, but only in the sections of their plants engaged in defense work.⁴⁵

The battle continued well into 1920. William Gates, president of the local Metal Trades Association (MTA), proclaimed that the strike had resulted in a victory for the open shop, but the molders’ union reported that it gained a \$7.20 rate in fourteen foundries, and that “this covers all the foundries” except the ones that were still on strike.⁴⁶ In June of 1920, the *Worcester Evening Post* reported that Worcester was now an “Open Shop Town”: the number of closed shops had declined from seventeen to seven of the city’s remaining foundries. Only nine thousand of the city’s fifty-five thousand workers were unionized.⁴⁷

The conflict between the molders and their opponents became a violent one in the fall of 1920. Shortly after five hundred iron molders marched in a Labor Day parade, several incidents took place between union molders and Reed-Prentice strikebreakers, but the alleged assaulters, the strikebreakers, were treated lightly by the courts.⁴⁸

Subsequently, the antiunion *Worcester Telegram* dramatized several attacks on Wells’ strikebreakers. Ultimately, two union molders were found guilty of assault and given harsh sentences in November 1920 by Judge Webster Thayer, who also denounced unions for “unpatriotic propaganda and lawlessness.”⁴⁹ Eugene Murphy, business agent of the New England Conference Board, pointed out that only four foundries, Reed-Prentice, Whitcomb-Blaisdell, Holyoke Machine, and Coppus Company, had refused the NWLB’s recommendations



Embattled but Unbowed

Workers at the American Steel and Wire Co., South Works (a division of Washburn & Moen), Worcester 1916. Courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum.

by applying for injunctive relief that they had not gained so far, but had cost the IMU \$300 in attorney fees and court costs.⁵⁰

Ultimately, the long strike had taken its toll on both sides. After both firms suffered \$400,000 in losses, the Reed-Prentice Foundry was closed by its new owners and combined with Whitcomb-Blaisdell. The foundry presidents and managers, Albert Newton Reed-Prentice and Charles Hildreth of Whitcomb-Blaisdell, both resigned, probably because of the losses as well as their leadership roles in the molders' strike.⁵¹

The recession of 1921 severely affected the metal trades industries in Worcester. Ironically, the sweeping injunctions sought by the four recalcitrant firms were gained on February 15, 1921, when business was at a standstill.⁵² The molders reported in 1921, "Trade very dull, scores of molders loafing and most [Worcester] shops on short time."⁵³ Attempts to negotiate with Rice, Barton and Fales failed and a strike was called, leading to an injunction suit by the firm in 1922 to prevent picketing at the firm.⁵⁴

The number of foundries and molders continued to decline. By the end of the 1920s, there were a number of small firms, but only one large foundry left, Standard, in which forty-one men were locked out.⁵⁵ The Reed-Prentice foundry closed in March 1931, and formerly union Standard Foundry closed and reopened as an open shop that same year. Union molders picketed, but a sweeping injunction was issued against them in May 1932.⁵⁶ Only six shops remained, and, although Local #5 added one hundred members by 1937, there were only three hundred union molders in Worcester, in contrast to the six hundred before the 1919–1920 strike.⁵⁷ As Alice Emerson describes the industry's demise, "The companies had fought the union and/or destroyed their own business or moved out of town."⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

The Molders' Union had started under less than auspicious circumstances in the late nineteenth century. They had gained some standing when the New York Agreement of 1899 normalized relations between the IMU and the NFA, guaranteeing arbitration and wage agreements. Although Worcester's Local #5, revived in 1890, had benefited from the 1899 agreement, it was hit hard by the NFA's abrogation of the agreement. A prolonged strike in 1904–1905, as well as the Panic and Depression of 1907–1910, did not help the molders' union, which was also dealing with industrial and technological changes, such as increasing numbers of apprentices and helpers who were often used to run molding machines.



Men of Steel and Wire

Workers of the flat wire department of American Steel and Wire Co. sit for a group photo. 1920 photo. Courtesy of the Worcester Historical Museum.

However, the molders' union gained with the coming of World War I. James E. Cebula states that "because of the shortage of labor in the war, heated economy and because of the alliance between labor, business, and government the union grew from 33,597 in 1915 to 60,480 in 1920. The postwar depression, however, brought a swift decline to 45,316 in 1921." Cebula insists that "if the short term gains of the World War I are discounted, the union's decline coincides with the heyday of the open shop movement years of 1906–1914."⁵⁹ Bruno Ramirez has argued that the failure of the AFL's metal trades department to define its structure, aims, and policies hurt the metal trade unions' attempt to fight the open shop.⁶⁰

In Worcester, other factors have to be considered: weak leadership, the small size of most metal trades shops, and the dominance of one group, the Swedes, in the metal trades through specialization, politics, and paternalism. The employers refused to budge even when the National War Labor Board mandated or recommended wage increases, decreases in hours, and union recognition. By World War I, the manufacturers also played on an anxious "climate of opinion," fear of general strikes, fear of Bolshevism ("The Red Scare"), as well as the open-shop mentality and antiunionism of the local media, especially the *Worcester Telegram* and the Worcester branch of the National Metal Trades Association.

Thus the deck was stacked against organized labor in Worcester; it was an open-shop city in an open-shop era. Few other employers could bring to bear such "solidarity against labor" as the metal trades manufacturers could through the Worcester branch of the NMTA, the *Worcester Telegram*, and the "Protestant Partnership." Few other employees labored under such harsh conditions as did the metal trades workers. Weak labor organizations, such as the Central Labor Union, did not help matters.⁶¹

Local #5 of the International Molders' Union showed a strong "union consciousness" in the early twentieth century, but the Worcester molders' strike of 1919–1920 failed because of the "climate of opinion." P.J. McGuire, the founder of the Carpenters' Union and a major leader of the American Federation of Labor, characterized this "climate" before the Central Labor Union in December of 1889: "Worcester has been known for years as one of the scab holes of the state." Thirty years had brought only a more systematic and efficient organization of Worcester's "solidarity against labor," in an even more heated and intensely open-shop era.⁶²

Notes

1. Bruce Cohen, "The Worcester Machinists' Strike of 1915," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (Summer 1988): 154.
2. Cincinnati Federal Writer's Project, *They Built a City: 150 Years of Industrial Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Post, 1938), 189-190.
3. Cohen, "Worcester Machinists'," 155.
4. Cohen, "Worcester Machinists'," 155.
5. Robert E. Weir and James P. Hanlan, eds., *Historical Encyclopedia of American Labor* (Westport: Greenwood, 2004), 362.
6. Weir and Hanlan, *American Labor*, 504.
7. Frank T. Stockton, *International Molders' Union of North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1921), 16, 21. For other histories of the union, see: H. E. Hoagland, "The Rise of the Iron Molders' International Union: A Study in American Trade Unionism," *The American Economic Review* Vol. 3, No. 2 (June, 1913), pp. 296-313 and Jason Dedeker, "Casting a New Mold: The Story of the Iron Molders' International Union and the Organization of National Labor," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Research* (2012) Vol. 4, Article 4.
8. Stockton, *International Molders' Union*, 136.
9. Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12.
10. Nick Salvatore, *We All Got History: The Memory Books of Amos Weber* (New York, Crown Publishing Group, 1996), 155-156; 178; 254.
11. Frank T. Stockton, *The Closed Shop in American Trade Unions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1911), 107.
12. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), *30th Annual Report, March 1900* (Boston, 1900), 125.
13. BLS, *30th Annual Report*, 125, 131, 142-144, 208.
14. Bruce Cohen, "Worcester Open Shop City: The National Metal Trades Association and the Molders' Strike of 1919-1920," in *Labor in Massachusetts: Selected Essays*, ed. K. Fones-Wolf and M. Kaufman (Westfield: Westfield State College, 1990), 123.
15. *Mellen's Magazine* II (July 1904) 518-519 and 547, II (Aug 1904), 32-33, and III (March 1905), 70. *International Molder's Journal* 40 (July 1904) 510, 520, and 40 (Oct 1904), 756-757.
16. Stockton, *International Molders' Union*, 136.
17. John S. Gale, "Letter," *International Molder's Journal* 43 (December 1907), 903-904.
18. *International Molder's Journal* 45 (June 1909), 387-388.
19. *International Molder's Journal* 46 (October 1910), 766-768.
20. *International Molder's Journal* 49 (January 1913), 28.

21. *International Molder's Journal* 49 (December 1913), 1002–1003.
22. *Ibid.*, 988–996.
23. *Ibid.*, 1002–1003.
24. *Ibid.*, 1002–1003, 1014–1015.
25. Weir and Hanlan, *American Labor*, 69.
26. *International Molder's Journal* 50 (October 1914), 793.
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